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Send all change of address notices, undeliverable copies, subscription orders and other mail to *Editorial and Circulation Offices:* 1811 Q Street, N.W., Washington, D. C. 20009

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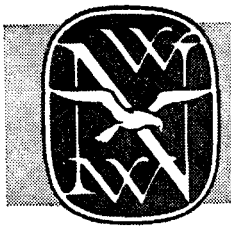

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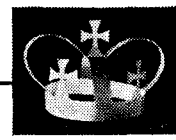
COLUMBIA  COLUMBIA

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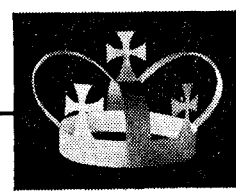
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If You Don't Mind My Saying So . . . . .

JOSEPH WOOD KRUTCH

One of my notebooks borrows its label from that of the famous box found among the effects of a New England spinster: "Pieces of string too short to save."

Some of the items it would be flattery to call *pensées* and others are obiter dicta not likely to be of great interest to the general reader. As for example: "When I was a child, garlic was eaten only by low-class foreigners. During my lifetime, I have (and it was a sad change for me) seen it first become smart, and then quickly achieve middle-class respectability, so that today it is almost ubiquitous and turns up in surprising places like dressing for fruit salad." Others are merely advertising slogans copied down because they amused me for one reason or another. On a San Francisco restaurant, "Hamburgers with Dignity." On the barn of a California dairy: "Our cows are not contented. They are constantly striving to produce better milk."

Other items make note of additional support for some thesis I have labored previously. For example again: "Because of my stubborn conviction that sociological explanations of conduct are usually convincing only ex post facto and couldn't have been used to predict, I was delighted by an item in a Tucson paper about two girl high-school students who confessed responsibility for making obscene telephone calls to a fraternity house. Would you expect them to be products of 'broken homes' or daughters of respectable families? You would be wrong whichever answer you gave. One was the child of a divorced couple, the other of a clergyman." Along the same line is an item supporting my conviction that if the present trend continues "the worker" will soon be the only man who has any leisure. At least a survey made by the Chase Manhattan Bank reports that since World War II, the average worker now works a forty-hour week, while forty percent of all managers, executives, proprietors, and so forth, put in more than forty-eight hours. (N. B. I don't trust surveys except when the results are on my side.)

My excuse for making such things public is that I am often astonished to get from readers from whom I have never heard before animated responses to some casual remark, while my most profound discourses pass unnoticed. The same thing often happens when I meet an old student who says, "I have always remembered what you said in class one day," and then proceeds to quote something that I have no memory of having ever said and that is, at best, not one of the things I would most like to be remembered for. When this happens, I am, if in a complacent mood, reminded that arrows shot into the air will fall to earth we know not where and that, if I remember the poem aright, they are sometimes found in the heart of a friend. At more flippant moments, I am reminded instead of the old burlesque bit in which the comedian fires a gun at nothing in particular after which, half a minute later, a stuffed duck falls at his feet.

At any rate, here goes.

Like Mr. Khrushchev, I have never visited Disneyland. An acquaintance who is

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also an avid reader of science fiction tells me that it is too good for children and that he made his first inspection alone in order not to have his aesthetic pleasure disturbed by the antics of his young boys. I doubt that my own reaction would be the same as his. I often approve of mechanical contraptions if they do something that nothing else can do or at least never did before so expertly or conveniently. But I hate them when they are merely mechanical substitutes for something real—like Disney's mechanical birds, synthetic jungles, and so forth. One of the greatest glories of his phony fairyland is, so I am told, a replica of Grand Canyon, and I have no doubt that it is much admired by people who have traveled farther to see it than they would travel to see the Canyon itself —and in some cases, no doubt, admired especially by those who have seen the real thing. For what is probably the same reason, children visitors to the Desert Museum outside Tucson are most impressed by creatures they have seen on the Museum's TV show. They are not interested in TV because it shows them animals but interested in animals because TV has made certain isolated individuals into celebrities. Grand Canyon must be a wonder, say the visitors, if Disney spends all that money as well as all that ingenuity in reproducing it. And I wager that more people, standing at the Canyon's rim, remark to a fellow, "I saw the Disneyland replica," than say at Disneyland, "I once saw the real thing."

Not many years ago, various jungle plants began to be widely used in offices because they grow in very little light. Nowadays they are being rapidly replaced by quite skillful imitations that require no light at all, no water, and no care. These fakes are also invading homes. In fact, I have even seen them mixed with a few living plants in so-called gardens. I fear that the time is rapidly approaching when all the plants will be plastic, all the animals stuffed, and all the scenery in Disneyland. This will be called evidence that man has finally come fully into his inheritance.

From the English, I think, our advertisers have borrowed the trick of beginning an elegant soft sell with a quotation from some respected writer. If I were in the business, I would suggest to, say, Merrill Lynch, Pierce, and so forth, this clincher from Dr. Johnson: "There are few ways in which a man can be more innocently employed than in getting money." But I am not in the business. I am, on the contrary, a mere consumer and as such more concerned to bolster my sales resistance than to sell myself or others, either the hard way or the soft. Accordingly, I have collected wise sayings to counteract the blandishments of specific persuaders. Here are a few of them:

For Chanel, Houbigant and the rest: "The best way for a woman to smell is not at all." (*Montaigne*)

For the book clubs: "Books of the true sort, not those things that moderns club for at book clubs." (*Charles Lamb*)

For *Vogue, Harper's Bazaar* and the rest: "Fashion is a form of ugliness so intolerable that we have to change it every six months." (*Oscar Wilde*)

For *House and Garden, Country Life* and so forth: "Adam and Eve were prisoners in a garden until, with Promethean courage, they sinned themselves out of it." (*Lamb again*)

For the correspondence schools that teach you how to succeed in business: "Trade could not be managed by those who manage it if it had much difficulty." *(Johnson again)*

For chambers of commerce: "Many people have the erroneous idea that a city must be large in order to be happy." (*Aristotle*)

For Schenley, Seagram and the rest: "Nor do I wish to improve the art of making poison pleasant." (*Dr. Johnson explaining why he did not inquire into the Scotch methods of distilling whiskey*)

For airlines, ship companies and other promoters of tourism: "I cannot but regard it as a kindness in those who have the steering of me that, by the want of pecuniary wealth, I have been nailed down to this my native region . . . What would sig-

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nify in comparison the thin and diffused knowledge and love of the whole earth . . . got by wandering?" (*Thoreau*)

These will have to do for the present unless a theologically inclined friend was, after all, not pulling my leg when he informed me many years ago that Tertullian had written: "He who has been bathed in the Blood of the Lamb need never bathe again." That ought to put even Lever Brothers and Procter & Gamble out of business.

I wonder if any of my readers have recognized one characteristic of this department (now in its eleventh year) that makes it very nearly unique—the fact, I mean, that it has never (well, hardly ever) mentioned sex. Lest anyone suspect that I am either prudish or pathologically uninterested in the subject, I will explain that I haven't said much about sex because it seemed to me that everything that could possibly be said about it had been said too often already. Nevertheless, there is one phenomenon that, so far as I know, has never been commented upon; namely, the change that, during the last couple of decades, has come over the prevailing intellectual attitude and constitutes a revolution as complete as that accomplished by the earlier antipuritan revolt. The twenties were very much inclined to regard, or at least to pretend to regard, sex as what they called "merely (though sometimes delightfully) biological." Nowadays it is not *merely* anything. It has become highly mystical again in the sense, at least, that it is again far more than either a mere incidental pleasure or a mere biological necessity. In the view of our leading novelists and critics, it has become a *sine qua non* of mental health, moral sanity and artistic sensibility —in fact, the essential mystery of life and the only key to its meaning. The Fiedlers, Mailers and most of the other "serious" novelists and "serious" critics, to say nothing of our Genêts, Burroughs, et cetera, are certainly not romantic or sentimental. They are likely to refer to the Mystic Rose by way of a four-letter word, but the four-letter words have come to have a ritual and magical significance so that the object referred to is again a Mystic Rose, nevertheless.

Toward the end of the twenties, I myself called one chapter of a book "Love: or the Life and Death of a Value." How absurd that would seem today when sex is again a value that most of our writers seem to believe no one else values sufficiently. Or consider Aldous Huxley or even T. S. Eliot in the days when the latter was just in the process of transforming himself from an *enfant terrible* into a classicist, royalist and Catholic. Commenting in *The Waste Land* on the visit of the young man to his girl friend, he wrote:

> When lovely woman stoops to folly and
> Paces about her room again, alone,
> She smooths her hair with automatic hand,
> And puts a record on the gramophone.

In any respectable novel, poem or play today, she would not put a record on the gramophone. She would write a book discussing at length how she had or had not been "fulfilled" and how all of us should make it our first business to see to it that we had been. I suppose that Lawrence was the first to turn against the "merely biological" cliché, but few writers have failed to follow him.

Everybody has his own explanation of the obvious fact that nothing intended to attract the attention of the public can now get along without introducing a seductive female into the picture somehow, even if she is not more appropriate than the one who is buying the latest "decorator color" toilet paper in the supermarket, or looking on while somebody demonstrates a bulldozer. Some say that this is because ours is a sinful age; others that it is, on the contrary, because we no longer think it sinful to admit what has always been true, namely that nothing else interests the civilized human being so much as the members of the female sex. They interest men because men desire them and they interest women because women hope to learn from their most attractive sisters the secret of their attractiveness.

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Being myself neither a Puritan nor an antipuritan but one who tends to see man's alienation from the natural world as the explanation of many things, I have my own explanation. It is that sex is, for many people, the only remaining link with that animate world to which they really belong. Life, in other words, is being reduced more and more to an affair in which only machines and sex count. We certainly overemphasize the first so perhaps the moralists are right when they say we are overemphasizing the second also.

While we are on this subject (and it is always a difficult subject to get off) permit me a few other observations on a somewhat different aspect of it. During the twenties, it was a universal belief that they ordered these things better in France. Formerly, they did at least order them differently. But times have changed so much that we have recently had unbelievable cases where the French courts prohibited the sale of books freely offered in the United States and we are now accused of corrupting the morals of the very nation against whose supposedly corrupt literature Americans defended themselves for a century or more.

As readers of the SCHOLAR do not need to be told, the French Academy revises its dictionary on the same system that we use here for painting the Brooklyn and Golden Gate bridges: when you reach the end, you start over again at the beginning. Now it happens that it recently reached (for, I don't know, how many times) that word which must be one of the first that the French child learns if he hears it in the nursery rhyme *"Il est cocu le chef de gare."* The definition read formerly, *"celui dont l'épouse manque à la fidélité"* (he whose wife is not faithful). But according to *Figaro Littéraire,* the phrase *"dont l'épouse"* has been expanded to *"dont l'épouse ou la compagne."* In other words, a Frenchman may now be cuckolded by either his mistress or his wife and, if very unfortunate, by both.

The anonymous conductor of the department *"Usage et Grammaire"* in *Figaro Littéraire* analyzes the full implication of this change and raises some puzzling questions or objections. His chief objection is one that all feminists will applaud. The Academy definition does not recognize that wives (and presumably mistresses) can be as truly cuckolded as their husbands or lovers. And yet, so he goes on to say, this is not only contrary to the contemporary acceptance of equality between the sexes but also constitutes a refusal to go along with other almost equally weighty authorities. The *Grand Larousse* has recognized since 1869 the feminine form of the word, *cocue,* and it cites the illustration: *"Les femmes sont bien plus souvent cocues que les hommes.* (Furier)" But it does follow this with the phrase "little used."

Doubtless it will be more often used in the future unless, as seems more probable, the epithet comes to be so little opprobrious that it falls out of use almost entirely in both the masculine and the feminine form. The *Figaro's* Grammarian also wants to know whether or not a man can possibly be appropriately classified as *cocu* if his wife but not his mistress is unfaithful or if his mistress is unfaithful and his wife faithful, or does he perhaps not deserve the appellation unless both *"manque à la fidélité"*?

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On Purveying Books

WILLIAM JOVANOVICH

CONFRONTED BY PRESS ARTICLES on the fatal effects of tobacco, a wit I know has decided that the only sensible course for a smoker is to stop reading. There may even be healthful reasons not to read, however subversive it is for a publisher to say so. Reading public statements on the universal progress of learning and letters can have the effect, I discover, of raising the blood pressure by lowering one's threshold against nuisance. "The American economy can no longer be understood," says *Fortune* magazine in one instance, "without appreciating the ever expanding role of 'the knowledge industry.' " As supporting evidence it shows this industry to have commanded revenues of $138 billion in 1958, and five years later, $195 billion. One's imagination boggles, one's reason is stayed, on seeing these figures—until one realizes that the "knowledge industry" in *Fortune*'s view comprises "not only education of all kinds, not only research and development, not only printing and publishing and broadcasting and the movies and the theatre, but information machinery of various sorts, professional services of several stripes, and even the telephone and telegraph business." To conceive of using the term "knowledge industry" can only be opportunist, but then to define the term is self-defeating. Still another instance is the New York *Times*'s grandiose description of the once projected but now abandoned merger between the book publisher Prentice-Hall and the radio-television company R.C.A.: it "would result in an entirely new type of company; one truly versed in the art of all communications." It did not, and would not. Not even Leonardo was versed in all com-

✪ WILLIAM JOVANOVICH is president of Harcourt, Brace and World. A collection of his essays, *Now, Barabbas,* was published by Harper and Row in 1964.

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munications; yet had he been, he would have as a humanist made a distinction between substance and conveyance, between what is essential and what is merely possible. Some things may not be worth communicating, as we know from television.

Typically both of these statements use "communication" to link together all kinds of enterprises that emit words, even, as *Fortune* says, the telephone business. The fallacy of such forced analogy is obvious: one might similarly conclude that we are all in the food business because everyone eats. A fallacy that is less immediately obvious is the equating of communication with knowledge, the presumption that communication is salutary simply as an act in itself, regardless of what is said or who says it. More and more we attach to the idea of communication a certain euphoria. That communication heals is a latter-day faith, the particular tenet of those believers in a kind of muscular psychology that calls itself, variously, human dynamics and human engineering. In their view the object of talking together is always reconciliation ("we are really talking about the same thing"), never a newly discovered dissent. So pervasive is the sense of confidence in the act of communication that one suspects that the conformity in modern society that we all complain of, that bland and uncommitting constancy of mind we affect to despise, is nowadays as much the result of constant communication as it once was of an isolating provincialism. Observe, if you will, a recent product of ecumenism. Last year the Protestants rose to applaud when the Vatican told the surviving kinsmen of six million Jewish dead that the Jews are finally forgiven. Or observe the nature of what passes for enlightened dissent in the American Congress. As he voted "aye" to spend seven hundred million dollars to fight in both North and South Vietnam, Senator Aiken declared that his vote was not "an endorsement of the costly mistakes of the past" nor a "blanket approval to waging [sic] undeclared war anywhere." Well, of course.

Now this commentary on grand, macrocosmic affairs will seem misleading to my purpose, which here is to examine the procedures by which books pass from publishers to booksellers to the public. It is not, in the event, irrelevant. Presumably everyone knows that there is a clear and present need to distribute more books—the

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most significant and lasting form of communication yet devised—to more people in our society. What is less well known is that publishers and booksellers act together erratically and communicate with one another poorly, probably because they are too little candid in their relation. It is widely held that publishers and booksellers speak the same language, although a cynic might suggest that, rather, they exploit the same language as the purveyors of a lot of poor books. I am not myself that cynic even though I have been known to publish some books of short-lived merit and even though, because the flesh is weak and the buyers are willing, I shall probably do so again. It is not cynicism that informs my view but, rather, dissatisfaction, an irritable concern over the ridiculously small number of Americans who buy new books, who read serious books, and who talk about books with other readers. This is properly the concern, in both a private and a public sense, of a publisher, for he can uniquely enlarge the general good and at the same time increase his own provision.

A case can be made, I think, that as he views the scene of meager and restricted book-buying the publisher is a guilty bystander. Now whereas the reading of books has not declined during the past several decades—there has been a heartening increase in libraries as well as the huge influx of cheap-priced paperbacks—it is true that the number of confirmed buyers of original works (usually in hard cover) has not significantly grown during the past quarter century. A musical impresario once told me that the concert circuit in the United States that presents emerging performers depends on a hard core of one hundred thousand people in New York City, a large proportion of these being Jewish. I estimate that the new novelist, the serious biographer, the essayist and critic depend on an audience of probably no more than four hundred thousand persons, a third being resident within fifty miles of New York. Of their religious inclinations I cannot speak, even were these relevant, simply because like other publishers I know very little about who buys original hard-cover books—and why they buy. Knowing little is, of course, a qualification of bystanders.

The publisher is guilty of some indifference, too, in his relation to booksellers, who presumably know more about who buys books.

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It is a cliché of the publishing trade that the publisher regularly competes with his own best customer, the bookseller. Not only does he sell books directly to people who could as well patronize a bookseller, but he will do so by offering price inducements—at the same moment, moreover, that his salesman is urging the bookseller to lay in a stock of the same books. Candor, indeed, must come before communication, and it is the better part of candor to admit that the essence of selling books through the mails, by the use of coupons, and through book clubs is price-cutting, and that the prices the publisher allows to be cut are precisely those of the bookseller. These methods of selling would vanish were it not for their primary appeal, which is the offer of a bargain. Rationalizations do not help much here. It is said, for example, that book clubs exercise a discrimination of choice for readers, yet it is obvious that the large book clubs depend mainly on best sellers; or, again, that direct-mail selling conveys books to readers in areas where there are no bookstores, yet an analysis of these sales will quite possibly reveal that the buyers are largely urban and metropolitan dwellers.

So it is that every publishing firm, observed in this harsh light, becomes a form of discount house. In the same light it will be seen as a place where individualistic, idiosyncratic enterprise is often praised for the wrong reasons. Editorially a publisher should listen to no one but himself. In choosing books to publish, his trust in solipsism is both intellectually necessary and commercially practical. For this reason publishers can be excused their customary egotism, but no such indulgence should be given to an overweening callousness in the matter of getting books conveniently to the public. Of callousness there are evidences, as when the publisher condones the distribution of a paperback edition of a work that has lived scarcely four or six months in hard cover; or when he consciously oversells a title for reasons of his own and then complains of returns from a bookseller who has, of course, his own cost to pay for this overcalculation.

Usually, when such a critical view is taken of an enterprise as I take here, the reply is that what is needed is better communication within the councils of the industry. Candor will serve here,

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too. The councils of the publishing industry are exemplary—in the eyes of the Justice Department. They are like the guests at Macbeth's table: they sit always in the company of ghosts and the thane's guards. The guards are the Sherman and Robinson-Patman acts; the ghosts are the Textbook Trust scandals of the late nineteenth century and the Macy's department store lawsuit of fifty years ago—instances of publishers combining to maintain retail prices of general books and to limit the choice of textbooks, practices long since abandoned. A consequence is that the publishers' associations move slowly and speak timorously. Like most American trade councils they are given to making oracular statements about the national interest and how their members serve it, yet even such statements are not wholly innocuous, as for example the publishers' annual appeals to the public that it read more, which always dwell on the availability of libraries and rarely mention bookstores. I am not, despite all this, advocating that publishers indict each other publicly—one is reminded that Prince Eugene of Savoy said that there is no point in court-martialing generals because it can have only one result: to show that not everyone can command an army. What I do advocate is that publishers now consider ways in which bookstores can be made viable learning centers in American communities.

As dissent is invited here, one can also question just how diligent booksellers, particularly those on or near college campuses, have been in advancing their own interest. College students seem to gain experience in practically every form of human activity, including social segregation, barter and sex, except the practice of buying and collecting books. A recent graduate of a large girls' college asked me, on learning my profession, whether I had to do with "real" books. At first I foolishly thought she meant "real" in the sense of worthy, good, serious, but no, she meant real as opposed to unreal books like, you know, magazines. Now what kind of education produces a mentality like that? And what kind of experience in a college bookstore produces a question like that? Is this person ever going to buy a book in what can best be described as her afterlife? I doubt it, and so do most publishers and booksellers, yet we must go on talking about the future of books de-

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pending on college graduates, who presumably will use their burgeoning intellectual and financial resources to build home libraries and who will serve on school and town library boards. Naturally, the college bookseller is not liable for the lack of cultivation, the *kitschig* mentality, of so many college graduates, and, to infer from recent campus disturbances, neither are those faculty members who so rarely speak to students.

Yet in the long run we are never more important than we think we are. I find it strange that no managers of university-owned stores are of faculty privilege, or are members of English or humanities department committees on diversified reading; that there is no provision, whether part-time or night-time or whatever, for training interested students in the book trade; that college marketing courses almost never make use of the only example of marketing on the campus, this being the college bookstore; that there are no student-and-store cooperative book clubs; that no university store (or other kind of bookstore, for that matter) offers lectures and readings on its own, as does Feltrinelli in Italy. One may well question. A university president told a group of booksellers that the proof of his regard for their function was his provision to enlarge the floor space in the campus store out of his new multimillion-dollar endowment. Bully. A man ought to pretend to what is possible; at this stage the bookseller is entitled to some pretension.

Obviously the American society is pretending to a great deal. Within ten years there will be more than nine million students enrolled in colleges, and possibly sixty billion dollars will be spent annually on education at all levels. The accelerating effect of educational expansion on book-reading and book-buying can readily be calculated: the factor of a rising population is multiplied by a rising per-person expenditure on learning. During the past five years the sales of higher-priced paperbacks have risen by almost two hundred percent; during the same period the sales of scientific and technical books rose by two-thirds. Neither of these increases, moreover, was in any part prompted by the new appropriations that will make federal funds directly available for the purchase of books—during 1967 more than four hundred million dollars will flow into

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book-buying out of the recent Congressional provisions for education and anti-poverty and job-training programs, quite apart from older and other government sources.

Now that we have formally recognized what has for a half century been true, that the business of America is education, it seems reasonable to agree that a more vigorous as well as efficient distribution of books is needed. To agree may not be enough, for the stuff of communication is more complicated and subtle than the mere statement of a common need. Publishers and booksellers must communicate on matters both ideal and particular in nature. They can begin empirically, a good principle in publishing as indeed in the reading of books, which should embrace an intense interest in detail and cultivate a suspicion of all grand ideas that are not delivered with a bill of particulars. They might, for example, consider a national program for the recruitment and training of professional booksellers, perhaps drawing on the German apprenticeship tradition. They might examine the demographic conditions of book-buying that now prevail as one way to determine who buys books and for what reasons. They might evaluate how committed, financially and professionally, booksellers are to selling books as opposed to other things (in general stores, records and greeting cards; in college stores, sweatshirts and pennants), and how the degree of that commitment affects their relation to publishers. They might find it to be scandalous that no comprehensive and current guide on how to start a bookstore exists, nor a continuing advisory service to bookstores. They might also examine the feasibility of establishing joint-publisher jobbing centers in ten or twelve areas of the United States.

And in this connection, it may be time for publishers to exorcise the ghosts and challenge the guards at Macbeth's table, and so determine how far they can go legally to act together to make better books more conveniently available to the American populace. If Congress can declare that baseball is not a business, it might be persuaded that publishing is not much of a business either.

A view of these and other particulars can be informed, I think, by a new concept of the bookstore as a learning center, however at once impracticable it may seem. Plainly, the bookstore is already

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the nucleus of a place where serious and various public communication occurs. It purveys books, the chief source of learning and a major form of artistic entertainment; and that is quite enough to begin with, were it done with a certain style. To diversify his competence ought not to dismay a bookseller who would pretend to a greater role. Music has already found its way into bookstores appropriately, as could art. I recall that years ago Howard Mumford Jones, who is superbly given to asking about sources, raised the question "If I wanted to buy a picture, where would I go?" in a meeting that was otherwise tending to treat the public's interest in art in rather empyrean terms. It is a good question to ask of most American communities. A possible answer in the future can be: go to the learning center-bookstore. Handling paintings and sculptures on commission is not an extravagant venture, given a site, for there is practically no inventory, no bad stock (in a bookkeeping sense, at least), and no remainders. Certainly if discount houses can anticipate selling works of art, as has been lately reported, then a bookseller could be as venturesome and probably a great deal more competent. There are still other techniques and products that can be envisioned within the concept of a learning center: the handling of achievement and aptitude tests in conjunction with courses of learning for adults who wish to continue their education at home; the printing, on a small offset press, of pamphlets by local writers or broadsheets of poems (like Joyce's *Pomes Penyeach*); the sponsorship of readings and lectures, which demonstrably need not be an expensive undertaking and which has the great advantage in the interest of true public communication of being uncensorable.

Of other potentialities, when education and entertainment meet a rapidly advancing technology on a high ground, one can at least ponder if not posit. It will not be long before television programs are packaged in cartridges for insertion in his set by the householder. There will be more reason for these to be sold in learning centers—bookstores—than in appliance shops. Or, again, we can expect Xerox or R.C.A. or I.B.M. to create means of transmitting pictorial and *written* matter directly to homes in such a way that it can be stored and reused, and if this procedure calls for a creator or producer (most enterprises do), then sensibly he might

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be the man who already makes public the individual expression of teachers and artists, the publisher of today.

If knowledge is not an industry, neither is it a profession, and I must not claim too much for either the publisher or his ally the bookseller even if they were, now, to lend a little illusion from a grander ambition. Society can of course proceed without either, although with a loss, I think. For the publisher can help us increasingly to distinguish between intellectual substance and the mere conveyance of words: he can, in short, improve communication by guarding its definition. There is more to purveying books than is dreamt in a narrow philosophy, if one assumes that serious books encourage the reader to march to a different drummer and to dissent from the common opinion if indeed its declared virtue is that it is common.

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Profile of African Independence

BARBARA WARD

WHEN HISTORIANS LOOK BACK on the first phase of African independence in the modern world, they may be inclined to stress one overriding factor—the degree to which outside pressures impinge on the new states at a time when they are trying to establish at home their own national identity. No doubt Africa is not alone in this. The ending of empires, even peacefully, is often the signal for new forces to press in, seeking influence and even control. Europe fought two world wars to work out who should fill the "vacuum" of waning Turkish imperialism, and some would say the issue is still unsettled. Yet if one compares Africa's present position with, say, that of Latin America in the last century, it seems clear that Africa's evolution is proving much more "open" and hence vulnerable.

There are a number of reasons for this. Technology has pulled the world together. Under no conditions would Africa of the jet plane resemble Latin America of the packhorse. An embryonic world society, centered in the United Nations, has drawn Africa's new leaders instantly onto the world stage—and if they go to the world, the world inevitably comes to them. In the United Nations, they have discovered a majority of states with a similar background and heritage—that of coming out of a century of Western colonial control. Such a field of common experience beyond Africa's boundaries inevitably draws African interest outward, and outside interest is drawn back into Africa in return.

Something of the same magnetic field appears in the issue of race relations. A secular experience of racial discrimination at the hands of the white man, common to many nations of the world,

✪ BARBARA WARD, British economist, author and lecturer, prepared this background paper for the African Conference on Progress Through Cooperation held at Makerere University College, Kampala, Uganda, in May. The Conference was sponsored by the Council on World Tensions. A book of selected papers, including Miss Ward's essay, the speeches and a report of the Conference will be published by Dodd, Mead and Company next year.

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keeps the current of interest and action flowing in and out of the African continent. In addition, the southern part of Africa—the last large area of the world under Western colonial or settler control—helps to keep world attention concentrated on the ending of the colonial century rather than on the problems of the postcolonial epoch.

Above all, the colonial issue in Africa has been drawn to the heart of the world's ideological dispute. The Leninist interpretation of imperialism and neocolonialism fits Africa into a worldwide theory of the cold war waged between "reactionary" and "emergent" states. It projects into Africa ideas and interpretations of a global nature. None of this universalizing of issues was apparent in earlier centuries. In fact, not since the wars of religion in Europe or the Moslem conquests of the seventh and eighth centuries have faith and force been so closely allied.

The difficulty about this central—and inevitable—preoccupation with the colonial issue in the context of the cold war, is that while it decreases the likelihood of an African consensus on the needs and future policies of the continent, it tends to increase the risks and complexities of outside interest and even intervention. The whole issue is ambiguous since at least two radically different interpretations of exactly where the colonial issue stands today confront each other in Africa. Broadly speaking, the Western Powers—with the exception of Portugal—believe that the phase has closed. In conformity with the principles of self-determination and national independence, first asserted in the American and French Revolutions and given worldwide application in President Wilson's Fourteen Points of 1918, they have, they believe, accepted their colonies' claims to self-government and peacefully agreed to remove outside control. The British are proud of the fact that African states, on achieving independence, have decided to stay in the voluntary partnership of the Commonwealth. A majority of French-speaking states have entered a voluntary but even closer association with the European Common Market. This, the Westerners think, would hardly have come about if long and bloody struggles had preceded the break. Even where the fight was prolonged and fierce—as in the single case of Algeria—not all goodwill was lost, not all links were broken.

The Western Powers also tend to feel that the connection with

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Europe helped to give Africa some of the preconditions of nationhood. They point to the missionary effort in education, to the founding of postwar universities. They argue that Western investment and Western purchases of Africa's products have launched the states on economic modernization and that a continuance of close economic relationships in the future will serve the interests of both sides. They underline both the postwar reversal of earlier colonial policy—that colonies should pay their own way—and the rapid growth in direct economic assistance which, from all Western sources, has been running at an average of about a thousand million dollars a year, the bulk of it from French and other European sources. Western governments probably feel less confident now about their direct political legacy to the new states. They question whether either the "Westminster model" or a multiplicity of parties, European-style, best suits the new nations in their early attempts to build unity on the basis of varied ethnic and tribal groups. But Westerners believe that they did transfer power to genuine national leaders and left behind a valuable tradition of a plural society and the rule of law. They tend, therefore, to support and sympathize with existing leaders and to regard attempts to unseat them and radically to redistribute political power as subversion and treason.

It would be difficult to conceive of a more opposite interpretation of the African scene than that put forward from the other end of the political spectrum. One cannot perhaps talk of a single Communist view of the colonial situation, for there appear to be significant differences between the Soviet and the Chinese approach. The Chinese are in a better position to identify themselves with the "worldwide struggle against colonialism and racial discrimination" since they are themselves emerging from an uncomfortable century of being jostled and attacked by outside powers, first Western, then Japanese. They have also endured racial discrimination at the hands of white peoples.

The Russians, on the contrary, are European, white, and can, on some interpretations of history, be accused of maintaining dominion over colored peoples in Asia. This is a significant factor in China's desire to keep the Soviet Union *out* of the Afro-Asian association. And although, since Mr. Khrushchev's fall from power,

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the theoretical points at issue between Moscow and Peking have become more obscure, it does seem that the two Communist power centers differ on the degree of force that will be needed to produce a single world order of Communist states, the Chinese arguing that Western imperialism must be driven out by violence if necessary, the Russians suggesting that there may be nonviolent roads to socialism and that violence could produce an atomic war after which, in Khrushchev's chilling phrase, "the living will envy the dead."

These differences—which are likely to produce varying emphases and interpretations in African policy—do not, however, extend to the whole field of Communist-African relations. In general, the Communist interpretation of what has happened is fairly uniform and the exact opposite of Western views. The Communists argue that only the "aroused will of the peoples of Africa" has enabled them to throw off imperial control and that even now the process is not complete. The Westerners are determined to maintain their economic dominance in Africa, which has been highly profitable to them but is sheer exploitation from the point of view of Africa, its peoples and its resources. The aim of Western economic aid is to tie the new, still weak economies to dominant markets and corporations abroad, thus ensuring that Africa's minerals are shipped off to the West without adequate returns to Africa and that its raw materials will be made available to the capitalist countries at low and fluctuating prices. And since the "strings" on aid may not tie up the deal adequately, Communists say, the Western Powers go further and set up local puppet governments whose members, in return for heavy bribes, are prepared to cooperate with the Western monopolists to sell the nation's economic birthright for what one might be tempted to call a mess of profits, if the profits remained in local hands, which, by definition, they do not.

From this Communist analysis follow the presumptions that national leaders who maintain friendly relations with the West are in all probability lackeys of capitalism, and that the "aroused will of the peoples," having got rid of their colonial masters, must now get rid of them. Liberation is thus not complete until every link westward is broken.

But at this point a Western countercriticism becomes relevant. Throughout human history, the withdrawal of one form of im-

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perial control has often been the signal for other power systems to come in and fill the vacuum. True, in the twentieth century, the effort is being made—for the first time in human history—to affirm the basic right of small nations not to be ruled and controlled by powerful neighbors, and to build up, in the United Nations, an instrument that can safeguard their independence. But the Western Powers question whether the Communist recognition of this right may not be heavily overlaid by the presuppositions of Marxist ideology. If, by definition, no state is "free" until it is Communist, then non-Communist states cannot claim the rights of freedom. "Liberation" can mean not simply the end of old forms of control but the imposition of new ones. The Soviet army freed Poland from Nazi imperialism and imposed control from Moscow instead. If such an evolution is possible in Europe, so argue the Western Powers, may not the risk be the same in Africa? Russia and China are very large states in comparison, say, with the Congo (Brazzaville) or Burundi. Is it certain that complete reliance on the Communist giants may not substitute a new form of outside control for the diminishing influence of the French or Belgians?

An outside observer can define the terms of the dispute since it is a worldwide dispute and an essential part in the dialectical dialogue of mankind. It is much more difficult to describe African reactions to the debate since they are, by definition, African, drawn from the unconscious roots of Africa's own history and from a more and more conscious attempt to find a specifically African response. Moreover, there is not one single African response but a spectrum of reaction from radical to conservative, different leaders and different countries emphasizing differing aspects of the debate—and the debate itself shifting under the impact of changing events.

But perhaps from outside one can assess the weight of some of the arguments and thus gauge the often contrary pressures under which African governments have to work. Links with the West have the advantage of familiarity and custom. Language, education, professional experience make an African more at home in London or Paris than in Moscow or Shanghai or, for that matter, Bonn. And since thousands of Africans are now educated in America, the same familiarity, on the basis of the English language, is growing up.

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This direct contact with the old metropolitan powers presumably allows educated Africans to realize how widespread the local Western commitment to anticolonialism really is. This in turn underpins belief that the excolonial powers, once gone, are not likely to return. Even when, as in East Africa in early 1964, British troops were invited to reinforce local authority, they were gone again before the end of the year. On the other hand, residence in some areas in the West—for instance, the Southern states of America—gives the African visitor a less comfortable picture of Western liberalism.

Turning to economic interests, one can argue that Western links do give Africa access to the wealthiest countries in the world, with the largest markets and the greatest supplies of surplus capital. The flow of aid continues. In fact, British aid to East Africa has sharply increased. For over a decade, France has been paying its African associates more than world prices for such products as coffee and groundnuts, and even though these discriminations are to cease in the latest agreements between the Common Market and its African associates, the European governments have undertaken to increase their grants to the Africans to help them to diversify their economies. Meanwhile, in the wake of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (U.N.C.T.A.D.) at Geneva, most of the European governments are giving more serious thought to means of stabilizing the prices of raw materials and providing the developing nations with balance of payments support.

In the field of capital, the share of local states in the return to be gained from investment seems certain to grow. Not only can sovereign governments experiment more widely in tax policies that retain more of the enterprise's earnings in the host country; companies are themselves working out formulas that offer more of the realities of partnership. The fifty-fifty division of profits between LAMCO (Liberian American-Swedish Mineral Company) and the Liberian government is a case in point. The Nigerian government has been able to negotiate equally favorable arrangements with Shell. In a different field, the British government has started buying out European farmers in Kenya and giving long-term loans for the resettlement of Africans on the released land.

So far, no government in Africa has been ready to neglect these advantages. The government of M. Sékou Touré in Guinea is at

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the radical end of the spectrum. But it has achieved a workable relationship with FRIA, the aluminum consortium developing Guinea's bauxite. Similarly, Dr. Nkrumah enjoys excellent relations with the Kaiser Aluminum Company, whose cooperation is essential to the success of the Volta River Scheme. Most African governments underline their desire for foreign investment and betray little fear that they will not be able to control the local activities of foreign investors.

Yet the issue creates a malaise, and when we turn to the credibility of the Communist accounts of colonialism, high in the list are memories of past exploitation, of decades during which Africa itself gained little from foreign enterprise beyond the customs duties used to cover the costs of colonial administration and unskilled wages for Africans—often migrant at that. The vast mineral wealth of Africa's south has advantaged the local Africans only by the "trickle down" process, and only in the Union of South Africa has this had widespread economic effects—and there the economic effects are nullified by political discrimination.

The extreme fluctuations in the prices of tropical products, the degree to which all middlemen profits in such activities as shipping, marketing, insurance, remain in Western hands, Western tariff discrimination against local processing—all this can be made to add up to a pretty ruthless picture of the rich getting what they can out of the poor. The very disproportion in economic power between such giants as the United States or, indeed, the vast American corporations, and the micro-states of Africa reinforces the feeling that even if the elephant is amiable, there is hardly room for him in the bath. And past history—from the Kimberley diamonds onward—is used to argue that he is not always amiable.

Nor is it only the past. Foreign investment is linked with the recent carving out of mineral enclaves from preexistent colonial territories—Mauretania out of French West Africa, Gabon out of French Equatorial Africa and the setting up there of very large Western mining interests. Here, it is argued, are the archetypes of neocolonialism—complacent local governments kept in power by foreign interests and, when necessary, by foreign arms. The attempt at secession in Katanga has been interpreted in the same sense and its leaders marked as "neocolonialist puppets."

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All this malaise and uncertainty are, of course, reinforced a thousandfold by the continuance of colonial and racial domination in Africa's south. There is no need to labor the point, but it is important to underline its link with the picture of Western capitalist powers unwilling to give up their allegedly monopolistic exploitation of African wealth. Angola and Mozambique are not only under colonial domination. They control the internationally owned Benguela and Beira Railways and hence the major outlets for Rhodesian copper. South Africa is not only ruled by a racial minority. It contains about one billion dollars of British investment and about a quarter of America's lending to Africa. Imperialism and capitalism, racial discrimination and Western investment, African exploitation and white wealth are believed to meet in southern Africa and to nail together the Leninist identification of "late forms of capitalism" with the continuance of the colonial system.

What does Africa make of these rival interpretations of its destiny? In general, perhaps, it is learning to live with them. Most African governments approach the matter pragmatically, picking out now this thesis, now that, according to their local needs and interests. All are united on the urgent necessity of ending colonial and racial dominance in the south. All are anxious to encourage foreign investment under proper safeguards. All want to trade with West *and* East. All joined the seventy-seven nations of U.N.C.T.A.D. to demand more equitable distribution of the world's commerce and capital. All, inheriting the paternalistic tradition of colonial economic control, and largely lacking local entrepreneurs, intend that government shall play a large part in economic activity. Most would describe this policy as some kind of version of "African Socialism" in which old communal traditions are combined with modern concepts of planning. Virtually all agree that for some time to come governments of national union or single party governments will be needed to make possible the forging of the nation and the unification of the state. In fact, it would almost seem that consensus politics might have a reasonable chance in Africa, since, on so many great issues, governments do not appear to be very far apart.

But, in practice, the issue is much more troublesome. Wherever

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governments are strong, frontiers stable, social pressures manageable, ethnic and tribal strains under control, the ideological debate about Africa's future does not impinge on local security. But many states are not in this condition. Colonial frontiers are often an arbitrary inheritance and irredentism is the result—as on the frontiers of Somalia. Internal cohesion between tribes is often far from complete. The social structures of some states include unresolved conflicts between privileged groups and the mass of the poor. Feudal leaders on the Saharan fringe, for instance, and dominant professional and business classes in the more developed communities enjoy living standards and opportunities closed to the majority, and the gap becomes steadily more apparent as cities grow and unemployment tends to increase. Many African states are, therefore, exposed to strong pressures for change, and the more these pressures undermine the stability of government, the more the ideological debate becomes a further factor of division.

It is an old story. Local divisions in Southeast Asia were entry points for the outsiders. Japan was able to preserve independence in the sixteenth century only by heroic self-isolation. India after the collapse of the Moguls presents the same picture. Internal weakness invites external intervention and when the world is polarized between rival doctrines, the intervention will be all the more likely and all the more lethal. What is a war of liberation to the Communists is an act of subversion to the West, and if either radicals or moderates turn to outside sources of help, the country is quickly sucked into the whirlpool of the cold war.

For this reason, the Congo has proved, so far, a turning point in the development of African independence. Up to 1960, the newly founded states were stable and united enough to determine their own destiny, to explore new relations with East and West, to decide their own part in the world's fierce debate. But the Congolese, lacking all proper preparation for independence, fell apart and have hardly recovered their unity since. In the struggle internal forces have looked for outside support; the various efforts of secession—in Katanga, in the eastern provinces—have not failed to call on outside assistance; and today, after the withdrawal of the United Nations experiment to secure international control above the pressure of rival factions, civil dissension still rages, embittering

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the internal divisions of all Africa, sharpening ideological differences and creating the climate for a possible renewal of external intervention.

Nor is it difficult, in the light of these last five anguished years, to project into the future the appallingly divisive effects of the existing crisis. The deep rift over the Congo is dangerous enough. But if the struggle for African liberation in the Portuguese territories, in Southern Rhodesia and in the Union of South Africa becomes entangled with the worldwide hostility between East and West, the southern lands could become not only the scene of a prolonged and bloody racial struggle but even conceivably the flash point of escalation to nuclear war.

Can Africa in its own interest abate its own divisions and lessen the risks of outside pressure and intervention? That there is a strong internal drive toward African unity seems beyond question. The Organization for African Unity (O.A.U.) exists. Various subsidiary organs of unity—the Economic Commission for Africa, the African Development Bank—exist. They do so in spite of the divisions of Africa into French-speaking states attached, in the majority, to a close association with Europe and to the *Union Africaine et Malgache,* in spite of the British Commonwealth partnership, in spite of such local associations as the East African Common Services Organization.

Again, a certain amount of economic assistance to Africa is already being channeled in through international agencies—the World Bank, the International Development Association, the Special Fund, the affiliated U.N. agencies. New organs of unity such as the Economic Commission for Africa at Addis Ababa could accelerate the trend.

At various times, the African states have attempted to mediate their own disputes—over Somalia, over the Sahara. Their *ad hoc* body to settle the Congolese dispute is still in being although it did not achieve a basis for mediation. And this fact is perhaps the key to the relative ineffectiveness so far of the O.A.U.'s attempt to secure the autonomy of its efforts. The organization is already deeply divided between conservative and radical elements and has not yet found a stance above the battle of its constituent members.

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A completely *African* interpretation of today's crisis has not yet emerged. Africa is, like other continents, caught in the toils of the cold war and its freedom of action is correspondingly reduced.

Yet the last five years seem to give some clues toward wider unity and more effective African initiatives. Wherever the O.A.U. can act on the basis of majority opinion, the risks of outside interference are correspondingly reduced. If wider authority and greater resources are needed, the United Nations is a safer instrument of pacification than rival appeals to rival Great Powers. At present, the U.N. is hamstrung by the Great Power dispute over peace-keeping and over the authority to control peace-keeping. But it would seem to be profoundly in the interests of African states, moderate or radical, right or left, to ensure that the United Nations can still act as policeman, conciliator and assistance-giver, provided the states most concerned with a dispute or a region wish U.N. jurisdiction to be introduced.

This is not simply an issue of peace-keeping. In view of the fatal lack of preparation for self-government given to Africans in such territories as Angola and Mozambique, international assistance on a massive scale would be needed after independence to prevent even worse versions of the Congo's tragedy. But such assistance can only safely come from the United Nations. Thus, the present time would seem the very last time at which Africa should acquiesce in a weakening of the powers and responsibility either of the organization in general or in particular of the General Assembly.

In a world driven by ideology, the small powers will founder if they are drawn into the maelstrom. As Dr. Nkrumah has often remarked: "When the bull elephants fight, the grass is trampled down." But the African states will avoid the bull elephants and keep their freedom of action only if they know how to keep clear of the Great Power struggle themselves and how to establish their own independent bases for action. Ultimately, no outside power can intervene effectively unless the invitation comes from within And the invitations will cease only when Africans themselves realize effectively and fully the implications of their own unity.

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The Light Side of the Moon

PHYLLIS McGINLEY

JUST AS MUCH NONSENSE has been talked about poetry as about gastronomy or politics. Any great branch of human endeavor spawns its critics and its interpreters, some of them men of valorous minds, many with little equipment except the desire publicly to be heard. Indeed, since poetry is at base a word game and therefore capable of being examined by a horde of word-lovers, it is perhaps the most overscrutinized of accomplishments.

Even the people who ought to understand it best—the poets—are not altogether to be trusted. Poets practice an irrational art. Theirs is an attempt to express the inexpressible (maybe as good a definition of poetry as any other) and they often bring it off. In other words, the outward shape of a poem may be logically planned but it has its nativity in imagination rather than mind. Trying to explain their procedures after the event, poets *in*vent. They attribute conscious artifice to what was essentially a creative experience, a kind of drunkenness.

I suppose I am alluding to that intangible which amateurs call Inspiration. There is such a thing as inspiration (lower case), but it is no miracle. It is the reward handed to a writer for hard work and good conduct. It is the felicitous word sliding, after hours of evasion, obediently into place. It is a sudden comprehension of how to manufacture an effect, finish off a line or a stanza. At the triumphant moment this gift may seem like magic, but actually it is the result of effort, practice, and the slight temperature a sulky brain is apt to run when it is pushed beyond its usual exertions.

This fever, small or large, is hard on the poet but good for the

✪ PHYLLIS McGINLEY is a former member of the Editorial Board of the SCHOLAR. The essay presented here is part of an article* that she has written for *On Writing, By Writers,* edited by William W. West, which will be published next year by Ginn and Company. Miss McGinley's poems in the essay are reprinted by permission of the Viking Press from *Times Three: Selected Verses from Three Decades,* for which she received a Pulitzer Prize in 1960.

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poem. And I doubt that any writer worth his Attic salt goes to his desk, in cold blood and guided only by reason, to commit a certain kind of masterpiece. I have never believed a word of what Poe wrote about how he composed "The Raven." I think he first wrote the thing (using, naturally, the techniques at his command) and then, charmed by his success, dissected it later. Even Milton, coolly appraising his genius and deciding that nothing short of the Fall of Man was subject majestic enough on which to employ it, must have been nudged by something more than Himalayan ambition. He must first have been set on fire by a theme native to his century and his theology. *Paradise Lost* was merely the true North toward which the compass of his talent was already set.

Conscious techniques, however, are important to poetry and particularly vital to that narrow branch of the profession in which I specialize. I write what is called Light Verse (as opposed, perhaps, to Ponderous Verse). My themes have been limited pretty much to the topical or the domestic. The views from my own terrace are the ones I describe, small, personal and suburban. If I have done anything original it is in my portrayals of childhood and adolescence, not subjects generally attempted—or bothered with—by my betters. But even in this minor yet demanding field, it is difficult to explain the processes by which a particular poem has been conceived, nourished and born. The most I can do is to name a few tricks of my trade, to talk less about theory than tactics.

One theory, though, I must try: a definition of what is meant by light verse.

Between it and poetry is no real division except impact. Light verse like serious poetry can be either good or bad, trivial or important. It can range from newspaper doggerel to the imperial heights of Marvell's "To his coy Mistress" (an example of how light and heavy poetry merge into a work of art, the manner being playful but the subject, Love and Death). Still, it does have a different target from its sister-craft. Serious poetry engages the emotions. Light verse aims at the intellect which it wishes to amuse and divert. (Mistrust that definition, too, like all generalities. Much serious modern poetry, such as Eliot's, draws a bow at the mind rather than the heart.)

Another difference between the two styles is the matter of

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adornment. Light verse demands brilliance of execution. The surface must be as glittering as the content; in some cases it *is* the content. Run through a list of great practitioners—Praed, Swift, Calverley, Gilbert, Hood, Chesterton, Nash, E. B. White, Dorothy Parker—and admit that every one of them is a dazzling performer. But poetry when it is noble enough in aspiration needs few tricks. Too much rhyme, alliteration, nimble meter, may interfere with the thrust of thought. Cadence the poet does need, since poetry is one of the sensory pleasures and its door to the spirit is as much the ear as the eye. But he does not have to lean on surface show. When Shakespeare was in a merry or a lyric mood he used all the tinsel trimmings. When high drama took over he turned to eloquence in blank verse. Tricks can get in the way, as Hood learned to his sorrow in "The Bridge of Sighs." Poor man, he had written so much nonsense verse that when he took up a tragic theme he was unable to shake off his mannerisms:

> Ah, it was pitiful!
> Near a whole city full,
> Friend she had none.

Those three lines are among the funniest in literature but unintentionally so. The reached-for rhyme that might have capped some witty stanza, annulled his serious poem.

Byron was a genius and knew better how to avoid such pitfalls. In "Don Juan" he used every weapon in the arsenal of prosody. His polysyllabic rhymes are magnificently successful and as satiric as the work itself. But when he wrote lyrics meant to fire or enchant, the artifice disappeared—or at least became invisible to the naked eye.

Remember that the light versifier is an acrobat, one who delights in turning rhyming somersaults, who flies through the air from prosodic trapezes with what he hopes is the greatest of ease. He *wants* people to understand his tricks. They are part of the act.

A third demand made on one who trades in lightness is lucidity. Novelists are allowed to mumble, to hide their meanings in a jungle of symbol. Poets, if they are serious enough, are permitted to become famously obscure. The light versifier is given no such latitude. He must speak so clearly and so intelligibly that a child

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can understand his product—not the inner sense, perhaps, but the outward sentence. Indeed, lightness, in the meaning of shedding light, may be an adequate apology for our profession. If the moon is our patron, she does not turn toward us her dark side.

Which brings me by a long detour to this commentary on my own poetry. I admit I don't feel entirely easy, talking about myself after having first discussed Shakespeare and Byron. That is fast company. I have no illusions about the imperishability of the hundreds of verses I have written over more than thirty years. But my editors have been benevolent, selecting from those hundreds a few that display me to advantage. Those I am willing to discuss and propose to work down (or up, as the case may be) from the serious ones to the straightforward examples of light verse.

"Midcentury Love Letter" is serious. It is a sonnet with the sonnet's classic emphasis on metaphor. Its title gives the reader his clue—he is going to overhear the lover addressing his (or her) beloved. The pair are probably married and no doubt middle-aged, although I happen not to have been thinking about personal age in my poem but about the age of this century with its darks and desolations. Truthfully, it is not metaphor but simile I have used here as my dominating figure of speech. I compare two people clinging together for refuge, in the world's winter, to mountain climbers caught in a storm and huddling "under one cloak" for survival. The cloak of the climbers is material; it is figurative for the lovers. But in both cases the pairs draw their safety from a mutual and human warmth. Because the total effect of such a poem ought to be emotion, I used few wiles of language. The rhymes (light/night, et cetera) are ordinary ones and sometimes not even rhymes but assonance (wander/defender, et cetera). The only hostage I gave to artifice beyond the strict fourteen lines of the sonnet form itself, was the arrangement of alternating feminine and masculine rhymes throughout, which is a favorite device of mine to create music and avoid monotony. (And if you don't know what a feminine rhyme is, go look it up.)

> Stay near me. Speak my name. Oh, do not wander
> By a thought's span, heart's impulse, from the light
> We kindle here. You are my sole defender

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(As I am yours) in this precipitous night,
Which over earth, till common landmarks alter,
Is falling, without stars, and bitter cold.
We two have but our burning selves for shelter.
Huddle against me. Give me your hand to hold.

So might two climbers lost in mountain weather
On a high slope and taken by the storm,
Desperate in the darkness, cling together
Under one cloak and breathe each other warm.
Stay near me. Spirit, perishable as bone,
In no such winter can survive alone.

It seems an easy kind of poetry to write and actually this one *was* easy. I composed it in an afternoon. The only rider I must add to that statement is that the idea of it had been rolling about in my mind for nearly two years before I tried to set it down on paper.

"The Doll House" is more of an exploit and took longer to do. It, too, is serious in content but partakes of the character of light verse in its piling up of domestic details. Its genesis is as follows: One of my daughters owned such a doll house as I describe. After she grew up and went away from home the toy haunted me with its unused perfection. Like Keats, I was saddened by awareness of life's brevity and change in contrast to the unaltering charm of this little building. Unlike Keats, I invented no profound or original statement. But I think I was able to suggest my own intimation of mortality. The poem's shape, as it should always do, hinged on its content. I planned it as narration, almost a short story. Therefore the tone had to be conversational rather than animated. Therefore, again, meter should be loose and rhyme unobtrusive. If I had been braver I might well have left out rhyme entirely. But I have traded so long in my specialty that I feel safer with rhyming guidelines. I did, though, try to disguise them, keep the reader from being tumbled about under a prosodic waterfall.

After the children left it, after it stood
For a while in the attic,
Along with the badminton set, and the skis too good
To be given away, and the Peerless Automatic
Popcorn Machine . . .

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You see, I have hardly bothered with ornament. So you are not unprepared when you reach the end and stumble across a genuinely emotional stanza.

> The *Times* lay at the doorsill, but it told
> Daily the same unstirring report. The fire
> Painted upon the hearth would not turn cold,
> Or the constant hour change, or the heart tire
> Of what it must pursue,
> Or the guest depart, or anything here be old.
>
> "Nor ever," she whispered, "bid the spring adieu."
>
> And caught into this web of quietnesses
> Where there was neither After nor Before,
> She reached her hand to stroke the unwithering grasses
> Beside the small and incorruptible door.

"Ballade of Lost Objects" is something else again. It is a piece of pyrotechnics. Although the final effect may be serious or at least wistful, it is an example of light verse per se. Shape makes it so. For a ballade is one of the strictest of the rigid French forms, composed unvaryingly of three eight-line stanzas and a four-line envoi. The rhyme scheme is complicated. There are six A rhymes, eight C's, and fourteen B's. The technique lies in making the rhymes fall naturally on the ear and of changing the refrain's connotation each time it occurs. Actually, to a practiced performer, writing a ballade is no great feat. But the majority of these verses in English are lists, catalogues, gaining impact from insistence. In mine I pulled off a tour de force. It has movement, growth, feeling; it is almost narration. Emotional or not, though, it is still an exercise in acrobatics with the difficulties compounded by my employment of feminine rhymes like "Spanish" and "hair with" which take ingenuity to mate without strain. (Most ballade-makers cling to safe monosyllables.) I believe it was a successful experiment and I am rather proud of it.

> Where are the ribbons I tie my hair with?
> Where is my lipstick? Where are my hose—
> The sheer ones hoarded these weeks to wear with
> Frocks the closets do not disclose?

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Perfumes, petticoats, sports chapeaux,
The blouse Parisian, the earring Spanish—
Everything suddenly ups and goes.
And where in the world did the children vanish?

This is the house I used to share with
Girls in pinafores, shier than does.
I can recall how they climbed my stair with
Gales of giggles, on their tiptoes.
Last seen wearing both braids and bows
(But looking rather Raggedy-Annish),
When they departed nobody knows—
Where in the world did the children vanish?

Two tall strangers, now I must bear with,
Decked in my personal furbelows,
Raiding the larder, rending the air with
Gossip and terrible radios.
Neither my friends nor quite my foes,
Alien, beautiful, stern, and clannish,
Here they dwell, while the wonder grows:
Where in the world did the children vanish?

Prince, I warn you, under the rose,
Time is the thief you cannot banish.
These are my daughters, I suppose.
But where in the world did the children vanish?

(French forms are artificial things and not much in favor these days in spite of Dylan Thomas' superb villanelles. I do suggest, though, that young writers would find them helpful in sharpening skills. Discipline is the groundwork of all art. The abstract painter has to know first how to draw, the symbolist to write ordinary lines. And the poet, no matter how soon he intends to throw overboard his formalisms, has first to be capable of a correctly rhymed and metered stanza.)

The two quatrains, "The Adversary" and "The Old Feminist," have this in common: they are both epigrams. When I was young and dazzled by my own emerging skills (and the fact that editors actually bought and published my work), I used to write long poems. Wide ones, too, which took up extravagant space in the

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New Yorker. The fact that I was paid by the line may also have had something to do with my verbosity. As I grew more accomplished, I became more selective. The verse grew leaner, terser and, I hope, better. When I finally got around to couplets and four-liners, I knew I was progressing with my education.

"The Old Feminist" is light verse by my definition because it ends with a play on words. But it is satiric rather than funny; and I think its conclusions apply not only to militant feminists but to other aging campaigners.

Snugly upon the equal heights
    Enthroned at last where she belongs,
She takes no pleasure in her Rights
    Who so enjoyed her Wrongs.

"The Adversary" is just ordinary serious poetry. It isn't even *that* in the version which appears in my book, *Times Three*. It runs:

A mother's hardest to forgive.
Life is the fruit she longs to hand you
Ripe on a plate. And while you live,
Relentlessly she understands you.

Can you tell what's wrong with that quatrain? Of course, "hand you" and "understands you" are not perfect rhymes. (And if you plan to use rhymes, you don't just fool around. You see that they match.) Either my ear or my notes went amiss. I here and now give you the correct version which the next edition will carry:

Mothers are hardest to forgive.
Life is the fruit they long to hand you
Ripe on a plate. And while you live,
Relentlessly they understand you.

"Lesson for Beginners" is also light verse and I give it high marks for technique excellently concealed. (You must understand that when I speak about my own work I am measuring it not against poems written by people far greater than I, but against my other output. My yardstick is my own talent and how well I have used it.)

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This was written during the period when I was learning to compress; and I hope it sounds as deceptively simple as I attempted to make it sound. Yet notice the rhyme scheme: A/B/C/D-A/B/C/D. Notice also the very short sentences, the alternating feminine-masculine endings, the final stanza which is half joke, half philosophical observation, and the fact that I have told a story in thirty-two extremely abbreviated lines. (For if I was to be playful about the celebrated Saint Martin, I had to explain what he was celebrated for.) The poem pleases me as many of mine do not. In other words, it comes off.

Martin of Tours,
When he earned his shilling
Trooping the flags
Of the Roman Guard,
Came on a poor,
Aching and chilling
Beggar in rags
By the barracks yard.

Blind to his lack,
The Guard went riding.
But Martin a moment
Paused and drew
The coat from his back,
His sword from hiding,
And sabered his raiment
Into two.

Now some who muse
On the allegory
Affect to find
It a pious joke;
To beggar what use,
For Martin what glory,
In deed half-kind
And part of a cloak?

Still, it has charm
And a point worth seizing.
For all who move
In the mortal sun

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Know halfway warm
Is better than freezing,
As half a love
Is better than none.

The poem that has pleased *other* people most, however, seems to be "In Praise of Diversity," which appeared in the Summer, 1954, issue of THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR. I am happy it appears here again because for once I can demonstrate exactly, or nearly exactly, how a piece of verse originated.

Some years ago the Provost of Columbia University asked me to deliver the Phi Beta Kappa Poem at the annual induction ceremonies there just before commencement. Many writers on such occasions are lucky enough to have a little something lying around of which they can make honorable use. I did not. I was forced to my desk (although "desk" in my case is a euphemism since I always write poetry lying down) to contrive something dignified enough and appropriate enough to be read to the scholarly young. I wanted it to be serious in matter although not sober in tone, topical but not ephemeral, witty without being hilarious. It also had to be long enough to take ten minutes to deliver; and even if you speak very slowly indeed, that's quite a formidable amount of linage, particularly if you refuse to be dull.

After a good deal of pondering, I decided to make use of the era in which we were then living, the age of Senator McCarthy. Like the rest of the nation, I had been caught up in the encounter between the forces of bigotry and liberalism, not always as clearcut an issue as it looks. I did not wish to write a stereotype of the arguments for either side. But I did believe passionately in Diversity. It also seemed a suitable subject for a college graduation and I could make its topicality extend to larger conflicts than the political one. I would write about the holy variety of the world itself.

Since the poem would be heard rather than seen, I decided on utilizing the accent of conversation. That meant that the lines must walk, not dance. (I once wrote a poem called "Ballroom Dancing Class" and you could waltz to it.) For my purposes a quatrain followed by a couplet seemed apt. But the meter should run to four and not five stresses, thus ensuring a certain vivacity lacking in

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iambic pentameter. I should, as usual, employ alternating feminine and masculine rhymes since they are pleasant to listen to.*

I had my subject and my form. It should have been easy going.

It was not. The poem took me three weeks to finish and I worked nearly every day, writing (and discarding) during the daylight hours and revising in my mind at night. Had I not been so eager to be lucid, to have my audience understand every reference, every metaphor, I would have done it in a tenth the time. The whole process was drudgery. I felt as if I were carving something out of granite, so obdurate did the material prove. It kept sinking, weighted down by its own significance. I was attempting a sort of sermon but it had to be lighthearted. My allusions must be of the period, yet seem timeless. I must never mention the Investigation. Once I turned polemical I was done for.

Then, as so often happens, from sheer overwork my mind's temperature went up. And so inspiration came down, helping me out in every tight corner but especially in the final stanzas. Although I often write my last lines first, steering the poem to the epigram, I had not foreseen how accurately the idea of the Trinity would fit my premise. That was the pleasant magic which descended. (This has occurred before. When I was working on the poems about the Christian saints of which "Lesson for Beginners" is one, I got so feverish that I wrote ten of them in four days, complete to —for me—witty last sentences. I could almost fancy that the kind old men and women whom I was chaffing were smiling from their Paradises and tossing good lines my way.)

Since this ingenious earth began
    To shape itself from fire and rubble;
Since God invented man, and man
    At once fell to, inventing trouble,

* Take the forgoing paragraph with a grain of salt. I have told you poets are not to be trusted when they discuss their own poems. Perhaps, like Poe, I invent after the event. I *think* I went about composing "Diversity" in the fashion I have just described; but it is always possible the procedure was not nearly so calmly reasoned out. Idea for the poem and the poem's shape may have simultaneously occurred to me. As a basketball player after long practice does not need to measure his shots from the floor but knows by coordination of eye and muscle just how the ball will best enter the basket, so a poet achieves effects subconsciously—and, again, after long practice.

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One virtue, one subversive grace
Has chiefly vexed the human race.

One whimsical beatitude,
    Concocted for his gain and glory,
Has man most stoutly misconstrued
    Of all the primal category—
Counting no blessing, but a flaw,
That Difference is the mortal law.

Adam, perhaps, while toiling late,
    With life a book still strange to read in,
Saw his new world, how variegate,
    And mourned, "It was not so in Eden,"
Confusing thus from the beginning
Unlikeness with original sinning.

And still the sons of Adam's clay
    Labor in person or by proxy
At altering to a common way
    The planet's holy heterodoxy.
Till now, so dogged is the breed,
Almost it seems that they succeed.

One shrill, monotonous, level note
    The human orchestra's reduced to.
Man casts his ballot, turns his coat,
    Gets born, gets buried as he used to,
Makes war, makes love—but with a kind
Of masked and universal mind.

His good has no nuances. He
    Doubts or believes with total passion.
Heretics choose for heresy
    Whatever's the prevailing fashion.
Those wearing Tolerance for a label
Call other views intolerable.

"For or Against" 's the only rule.
    Damned are the unconvinced, the floaters.
Now all must go to public school,
    March with the League of Women Voters.
Or else for safety get allied
With a unanimous Other Side.

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There's white, there's black; no tint between.
    Truth is a plane that was a prism.
All's Blanshard that's not Bishop Sheen.
    All's treason that's not patriotism.
Faith, charity, hope—now all must fit
One pattern or its opposite.

Or so it seems. Yet who would dare
    Deny that nature planned it other,
When every freckled thrush can wear
    A dapple various from his brother,
When each pale snowflake in the storm
Is false to some imagined norm?

Recalling then what surely was
    The earliest bounty of Creation:
That not a blade among the grass
    But flaunts its difference with elation,
Let us devoutly take no blame
If similar does not mean the same.

And grateful for the wit to see
    Prospects through doors we cannot enter,
Ah! let us praise Diversity
    Which holds the world upon its center.
Praise *con amor'* or *furioso*
The large, the little, and the soso.

Rejoice that under cloud and star
    The planet's more than Maine or Texas.
Bless the delightful fact there are
    Twelve months, nine muses, and two sexes;
And infinite in earth's dominions
Arts, climates, wonders, and opinions.

Praise ice and ember, sand and rock,
    Tiger and dove and ends and sources;
Space travelers, and who only walk
    Like mailmen round familiar courses;
Praise vintage grapes and tavern Grappas,
And bankers and Phi Beta Kappas;

Each in its moment justified,
    Praise knowledge, theory, second guesses;
That which must wither or abide;

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Prim men, and men like wildernesses;
And men of peace and men of mayhem
And pipers and the ones who pay 'em.

Praise the disheveled, praise the sleek;
Austerity and hearts-and-flowers:
People who turn the other cheek
And extroverts who take cold showers;
Saints we can name a holy day for
And infidels the saints can pray for.

Praise youth for pulling things apart,
Toppling the idols, breaking leases;
Then from the upset apple-cart
Praise oldsters picking up the pieces.
Praise wisdom, hard to be a friend to,
And folly one can condescend to.

Praise what conforms and what is odd,
Remembering, if the weather worsens
Along the way, that even God
Is said to be three separate Persons.
Then upright or upon the knee,
Praise Him that by His courtesy,
For all our prejudice and pains,
Diverse His Creature still remains.

When "Diversity" was finished I had exactly what I had hoped for—a piece of didactic light verse that owed something to Pope and something to my own doggedness. I was as well satisfied with the result as I have been with anything of mine. But I had not enjoyed the act of creation as I had in other poems such as "Ballade of Lost Objects." There had been no tumbling and no somersaults, only hard work and the assiduous polishing that has to go into the professional product.

In both prose and verse I am chiefly a technician, a painstaking, hardworking laborer in literary vineyards. My virtue is to beguile. While I preach, I amuse. Perhaps, too, my verse, since it can be read by the general public, opens doors onto wider vistas than mine —keeps in the memory of non-poetry lovers the shape of stanzas on a page. It may not be the Everest of attainments but I and my readers will have to settle for it.

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The Mysteries of Identity

A Theme in Modern Literature

ROBERT LANGBAUM

ONE OF THE MOST FASHIONABLE LITERARY TERMS these days is persona—which is the Latin word for the mask that actors used to wear in the Greek and Roman theater. The currency of the term suggests that the identity of the author and his characters, and the distinction between them, has become a problem. When critics call characters in poems and plays and novels personae, they may mean one of two different things. They may mean that the characters are masks through which the author speaks, or they may mean that the characters have nothing to do with the author but are the masks or types necessary in order that the action may be played out. With both meanings of the word persona, the critics are saying that literature is or ought to be impersonal.

Like most technical terminology the word persona is a weapon in a campaign—in this case a campaign against the autobiographical or confessional style of much nineteenth-century literature. It is in nineteenth-century literature that the issue first arises between a personal and an impersonal literature, that it becomes a problem to distinguish between the author and his characters. To understand the twentieth-century reaction, we have therefore to understand why nineteenth-century literature became so personal.

A good working explanation is provided, I think, by the Chicago philosopher George Herbert Mead, in his *Movements of Thought in the Nineteenth Century*. According to Mead, the ro-

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manticists found themselves in a world in which public symbols had lost moral authority. Their aim was to reestablish values on an empiric basis. Since they felt analysis could not yield values but could only destroy them, the romanticists developed a projective habit of mind. They came to know the world, not from outside by applying ideas to it, or by passively responding to it, but by playing roles in it—by projecting themselves into nature, the past and other people. In other words, they were aware of themselves as inside, or as having organized, the experience they were perceiving. They thus came to know the object and the self in the object, and it was through maintaining a sense of continuity among the ever-increasing number of their projected selves that they evolved a sense of identity.

Whether nineteenth-century people were as people more projective than their ancestors, I would not venture to say (although the increase of the humanitarian or empathic response would suggest that they were). But Mead's hypothesis does explain certain new forms that appear in romantic literature. It explains a new kind of dramatic nature poem in which a poet, whom we identify as Wordsworth, Shelley or Keats, makes us believe that he is really seeing the landscape or hearing the bird he writes about, and even that he is writing the poem on the spot. The poem is about an experience in which the poet perceives in the landscape "the life of things" which he understands to be his own life, and thus comes out with a larger apprehension of nature and himself. The poem is an episode in his evolution, in his autobiography. We believe in the experience because we know Wordsworth exists, and because the poem is organized not logically—it does not illustrate any idea we have to accept or reject—but psychologically. The movement of thought is by association; all the disparate sensations, memories and associations belong to one perceiver. The psychological organization invites our projection into the poem; we stand where the poet stands, we see what he sees and feel what he feels. The poem, then, is for us what the landscape is for the poet; and it should become an episode in our evolution as well. Our relation to it is empathic.

It is no accident that the nineteenth century saw the rise of autobiographies in verse and prose and of autobiographical nov-

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els. For these forms operate rather like the dramatic lyrics I have described. They derive their validity from their connection with a real person and their unity from the singleness of the protagonist (rather than from the singleness of the action); they describe the evolution of his identity through quite different phases; our relation to him is empathic—we understand and forgive all. There is often much to forgive, since Faust, who sold his soul to the devil and committed many crimes, is a model for the hero of this kind of literature. Faust is justified in the end not because of any conversion, but simply because he has lived energetically and with fidelity to the logic of his own being. He has realized himself completely, and presumably Goethe and the reader realize themselves to one degree or another by playing his role. Literature would seem to have been for the romanticists a part of the role-playing process by which in real life we establish identity. Literature would seem to be most effective in this function the farther it asks us to project. Hence the interest in so much romantic literature in exotic settings, strange points of view, new modes of being—that of children, primitives, idiots, criminals.

To indicate briefly the extent to which all this is new in literature, I will have to oversimplify as though I were making a diagram. In the earlier literature, characters were largely defined by their stations and it was assumed that their actions, their manners and their style of speech would adequately reveal them. This is what is involved in the classical doctrine of decorum—that a king should be given the qualities appropriate to a king and a slave the qualities appropriate to a slave. One contemplates a play built on such principles from the outside, aware that one is not a king or a slave. This is true even of Shakespeare's plays, although they seem in their range of sympathy so far ahead of their time. It is because Lear is kingly that we behold his degradation with awe. If we are not to read Shakespeare as though he were a nineteenth-century romanticist, we must allow our sympathy for his characters to be held in check by plot—by considerations, that is, of their rank and actions. We must remember that Macbeth is, for all his pathos, a usurper and murderer and that Prince Hal must abandon the engaging Falstaff because Hal is destined to be King Henry V.

In the nineteenth century, however, people were no longer

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willing to take it on faith that the king had the qualities he was supposed to have or the slave the qualities he was supposed to have. They rather suspected the opposite, and what they wanted to get at was the man underneath that crown or those rags, the man with whom they could identify themselves. The real man, the romanticists felt, was not to be got at through his social relations—his actions, his manners—there he was superficial, he was playing a role. The real man was to be got at when he was alone, in nature, when he was "musing"—thinking, that is, by free association—or when he was having visions or dreams. It was not decorum but sincerity that the romanticists valued in literature, and sincerity meant that the author, whether in lyric or in fiction or drama, was projected into the character and that the reader, too, could therefore project himself into the character. In beginning to break down the socially defined outline of character, the romanticists broke down the distinctions among author, reader and character; they broke down the distinction between life and art. The important point is, however, that the romanticists broke down the socially defined outline of character in order to liberate a vital and authentic self the existence of which they firmly believed in.

Now for the reactions against all this. The first, which took place mainly in poetry, was a reaction against the appearance in the poem of a person who could be identified as the author or as an obvious alias for the author. This reaction first found expression in the dramatic monologue, a form that became important in the Victorian period and is particularly associated with Browning. It is here that the concept of persona properly enters modern literary discussion; for in the dramatic monologue, the poet gives lyric utterance to a character who is identified as completely as possible as not himself. Yet our relation, and presumably the author's relation, to this speaker is like our relation to the speaker of the romanticists' dramatic lyric.

It was Yeats in the twentieth century who caused us to turn the concept of persona upon this kind of poetry, when he suggested that the poet writes most sincerely about himself when he writes not about what he is but about what he is not—when he writes about his opposite, his mask. Yet Yeats himself wrote many dramatic lyrics, although they do not always—"Among School

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Children" is an example—have natural settings. In his *Autobiography,* Yeats describes a program he laid out for himself—a program that explains, as we now see, the increasingly personal voice of his poetry as well as the strategy of the dramatic lyric. "We should write out our own thoughts in as nearly as possible the language we thought them in, as though in a letter to an intimate friend. We should not disguise them in any way; for our lives give them force as the lives of people in plays give force to their words. Personal utterance, which had almost ceased in English literature [Yeats was thinking of the Victorian reaction against personal utterance], could be as fine an escape from rhetoric and abstraction as drama itself."

When in later years Yeats reread the early attempts at sincere utterance that grew out of this program, he found "little but romantic convention, unconscious drama. It is so many years before one can believe enough in what one feels even to know what the feeling is." The drama had precisely to be conscious; that is what Yeats learned. The only way to avoid self-deception and unconscious insincerity was to turn your life into a play and yourself and your friends into dramatis personae. That is what Yeats did with his friends, with Maud Gonne for example, and what he did with himself and his life, when he dramatized it by moving into an old tower and publishing *A Vision,* that book of revelation allegedly transmitted to him through his wife's automatic writing. It is his dramatized life and artfully masked self that Yeats draws upon for his great personal utterances.

Turning Yeats's concept of the mask back upon the poetry of the romanticists, we now see that the Wordsworth, Shelley and Keats who appeared in their poems were themselves personae, and that the autobiographical connection was itself an artistic strategy. It is difficult to know to what extent the so-called real poet is not himself an artistic construction which he himself took over from his poems. The concept of persona does not change, it merely refines, our understanding of the connection between the poem and the process by which the poet, and to a lesser extent the reader, establishes and maintains an identity. We are still in an area where the self is believed in.

The second reaction was against the romantic belief in the self.

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The novelists took over from the poets the attack on the public definition of character. They came at it from two sides. The realists and later the naturalists came at it from outside to show that public roles were humbug—the banker was a crook, the minister a hypocrite, but the prostitute had a heart of gold. They also suggested that there wasn't much going on inside either —base drives according to the realists, environmental and hereditary conditioning according to the naturalists. The psychological naturalists pushed social role and action offstage, on the assumption that it didn't reveal anything important about character. They analyzed psychological processes down to the stream of consciousness. At this point the outline of character almost disappears, all characters begin to look much alike, it is difficult to find any positive, authentic core of being that can be called the self.

Joyce's *Ulysses* brings all these destructive tendencies together and shows us the way through them as well. We get the minutely detailed and apparently random and meaningless account of a day in Dublin. The various characters encounter each other casually. The two main characters, Bloom and Dedalus, meet and part. Bloom's wife commits adultery as she has before and as she will again. The characters are portrayed through a stream of consciousness, random, irreverent, full of the basest details. No meaning or value comes from the society, and there is apparently no meaning or value in the events. On the surface, the novel looks like a depiction of utter chaos, both external and internal. But underneath a pattern asserts itself, by way of the principle of unconscious repetition. The characters are differentiated by recurring images and associations in their stream of consciousness, and in these images and associations they recapitulate much of the history of the race. Bloom, the little Jewish advertising salesman, *unconsciously* repeats the movements of Ulysses; Dedalus in his search for a father *unconsciously* repeats the movements of Telemachus; Molly Bloom appears in her final soliloquy as, *unconsciously,* an enduring earth mother who makes the book's final affirmation.

T. S. Eliot said, in his review of *Ulysses,* that Joyce had shown us the way out of modern chaos by using instead of "narrative

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method" what Eliot called "the mythical method." Eliot uses the same method in *The Waste Land,* where underneath the social chaos and the vacant prattle of the characters, we find the unconscious longing for water, for the renewal symbolized in the ancient vegetation myths described by Frazer. Eliot's characters, too, have unconscious, archetypal identities, and their outlines are fluid; one character merges into another as in a given situation they share an archetypal identity.

The mythical method is best explained by Thomas Mann who, in *Joseph and His Brothers,* connects it with a concept of identity different from ours. Joseph, Mann tells us, did not distinguish

> clearly between his old mentor [Eliezer] and the original Eliezer, and had the less reason to do so, in that the old man himself did not, who in referring to himself as often as not had in mind Eliezer the servant of Abraham. . . . The old man's ego was not quite clearly demarcated . . . it opened at the back, as it were, and overflowed into spheres external to his own individuality both in space and time; embodying in his own experience events which, remembered and related in the clear light of day, ought actually to have been put into the third person. But, then, just what do we mean by actually? And is man's ego a thing imprisoned in itself and sternly shut up in its boundaries of flesh and time? Do not many of the elements which make it up belong to a world before it and outside of it? The notion that each person is himself and can be no other, is that anything more than a convention, which arbitrarily leaves out of account all the transitions which bind the individual consciousness to the general?

The individual as a literary subject probably is, for the moment at least, finished. In attempting to liberate the individual from the social and moral categories that defined him, literature somehow dissolved him out of existence. Writers nowadays, who want to face this problem, can, I think, face it in one of two ways. They can deny the existence of a free and knowable self and—like Beckett, Sarraute and Robbe-Grillet in Paris—take soundings of characters only to make us hear the hollow ring within. Or they can—like Mann, Joyce, Yeats, Eliot—reaffirm the authenticity of the self by finding that individual identity emerges, like smaller Chinese boxes out of larger, from an archetypal identity.

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This is the point at which we can return to the second meaning of persona—the mask that is required by the mythical pattern, the ritual, the plot—the mask that is there before any person turns up to fill it. This leads to a new conception of how art helps author and reader to establish identity. It offers us masks to put on.

Yeats, in his essay "The Tragic Theatre," tells us that character belongs to comedy and is incompatible with tragedy. "Tragedy," he says, "must always be a drowning and breaking of the dykes that separate man from man." "In mainly tragic art one distinguishes devices to exclude or lessen character." Shakespeare, who gives us character, "is always a writer of tragicomedy," and it is in his "moments of comedy that character is defined."

In the stories of the Danish writer Isak Dinesen, marionettes and marionette comedies are, instead, the model for this new concept of identity. Marionettes offer a simplified diagram of the double vision that makes art art; for we play along with the pretense that they are not marionettes, that they have purposes of their own, while perfectly aware that someone is pulling the strings. The latter awareness is in the case of marionettes so exaggerated as to make every marionette play a comedy no matter how painful the material. One thinks of Bergson's definition of the comic as "a momentary anesthesia of the heart" that occurs when we see life as mechanical and therefore withdraw our sympathy. Although Isak Dinesen wrote only one marionette comedy, the marionette comedy helps us understand some of her most distinctive qualities—the deliberate emphasis on artifice and the imposition on painful material of a comic awareness, the awareness that someone is pulling the strings, as an answer to the story's problems.

The movement away from character toward a nonvital, mechanical art is brilliantly charted in "The Marionette Theater," a dialogue written at the turn of the nineteenth century by the German playwright and fiction writer, Heinrich von Kleist. A famous dancer remarks that "the puppets could be very effective teachers of the dance," because with them choice is at a minimum. "Each puppet," he says, "has a focal point in movement, a center of gravity, and when this center is moved, the limbs follow without

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any additional handling. After all, the limbs are pendula, echoing automatically the movement of the center."

The aesthetic principle is that the artist does not consciously govern a multitude of details which it would be beyond anyone's capacity to govern. His conscious intention is simple, but if it is aesthetically right, if it is at "the center of gravity," the ramifications will automatically follow. It is the automatism that transforms nature into art.

The dancer admits that the marionette's dance is not entirely mechanical; it is to some degree expressive of the puppeteer. Yet he goes on to speculate that "this last vestige of human spirit can be eliminated from the marionettes; and then their dance would be completely mechanized"—it would be perfect. If an artisan would build him a marionette according to his directions, that marionette could "perform a dance which neither I nor any other capable dancer of this era could duplicate." The marionette would be perfect because the placement of its center of gravity would be, paradoxically, "more true to nature than in the common marionette." The completely mechanical artwork would meet, in other words, the natural ideal; for if the center of gravity were just where it ought to be, then all intentions would be subsumed, the right intention would be built in and there would be no need or possibility for conscious intention to intervene between nature and art. Since the puppeteer could no longer exercise choice, the completely mechanical marionette would never, like human dancers, slip into affectation.

"Great blunders," he added, "are inevitable. We have eaten from the tree of knowledge; the paradise of Eden is locked up; and the Cherubim is behind us. We must wander about the world and see if, perhaps, we can find an unguarded back door."

Art is the back door to Eden—art that delivers us from self-consciousness through ritual or, in Yeats's phrase, dying into a dance. "We see," says the dancer, "that in the natural world, as the power of reflection darkens and weakens, grace comes forward more radiant, more dominating." Art, however, gives knowledge too, so that it restores

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"a purity that has either no consciousness or consciousness without limit: either the jointed doll or the god."

"Therefore," I said, a little distracted, "we must eat from the tree of knowledge again and fall back into a state of innocence."

"By all means," he replied, "that is the last chapter in the history of the world."

We have here the central myth of romantic literature; it is the secularized and psychologized version of the central myth of Christianity—the myth of the fall and redemption. The fall for the romanticists is a fall into self-conscious or analytic perception. All this is in English literature most explicitly set forth by Blake, who takes off from the theological paradox of the Fortunate Fall—the paradox that man, in regaining Eden through moral choice and an awareness of God's grace and love, will have gained a greater Eden than the unconscious state of innocence he lost. In the romantic version, the paradox is interpreted to mean that art recaptures for consciousness the data of unconscious knowledge and thus regains for us our lost unity of perception through an expansion of consciousness. That is the meaning of Kleist's conclusion.

When he suggests in the end that the cure for consciousness is more consciousness, Kleist's dancer uses as an example a concave mirror where "the image vanishes into infinity and appears again close before us." This follows the author's story about a young man who "lost his innocence" because he became aware of his own beauty in a mirror. In Milton's *Paradise Lost,* Eve's first act after she has been created is to gaze longingly at her own reflection in water; and the suggestion is that the fall began at that moment. In Isak Dinesen, there are many scenes in which young women, like so many Eves, first discover their womanhood by falling in love with their own nakedness in a mirror. Her hero in "Roads Round Pisa" (*Seven Gothic Tales*) looks into a mirror to find out who he is; and the point of the story is that such introspection is analytic and leads to nothing but an endless round of reflection —that the only way to find out who you are is to don a mask, to assume in other words an *ad hoc* self, and step not into raw experience but into "a vein of events," a story. The point is that at the

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level of experience where events fall into a pattern of their own (the pattern, say, of seeking for a father) they are an objectification of your deepest will, since they make you do things other than you consciously intend; so that in responding like a marionette to the necessities of the story, you actually find out what you really want and who you really are.

The theme symbolized by the mirror—a theme I would call the mysteries of identity—emerges from the romantic interpretation of the fall. Since the romanticists interpreted the fall as a fall in perception, they saw the main problem left by it as a problem of epistemology or psychology. The problem was how to regain a connection with the outside world, how to find a basis for action or an action adequate to one's awareness of one's own potentiality. The question was at what level of behavior—and in literature through what kind of plot—a person manifests his true self.

Isak Dinesen is an important writer because she has understood the tradition behind her and has taken the next step required by that tradition. Like other writers of her generation—Rilke, Kafka, Mann, Joyce, Eliot, Yeats, too, although he is older—she takes off from a sense of individuality developed in the course of the nineteenth century to the point of morbidity, and leads that individuality where it wants to go. She leads it back to a universal principle and a connection with the external world. The universal principle is the unconscious life of man and nature, which, welling up in the human consciousness as myth, is the source of civilization, individual consciousness, and our concept of God's unlimited consciousness. It seems to have been the function of the literary generation born in and around the decade 1875-1885—the generation after that of Nietzsche, Frazer and Freud, the great explorers of myth and the unconscious—to effect a transition from the individual to the archetypal character: from the novel, with its separation of psychological and external data, to the myth which speaks with one voice of both.

Thomas Mann, in an essay of 1936 called "Freud and the Future," speaks of the transition in his own fiction from the psychological and naturalistic *Buddenbrooks* to the mythical *Joseph and His Brothers*. Speaking of the "point at which the psychologi-

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cal interest passes over into the mythical," Mann says: "It is plain to me that when as a novelist I took the step in my subject-matter from the bourgeois and individual to the mythical and typical my personal connection with the [psycho]analytic field passed into its acute stage." The connection lies in the answer, which is "the innermost core of psychoanalytic theory," to "the mystery of the unity of the ego and the world." The answer lies in the perception to which psychoanalysis leads us that "the apparently objective and accidental" is "a matter of the soul's own contriving," that "the giver of all given conditions resides in ourselves." When we remember, Mann explains, all Freud has revealed about "error, the retreat into illness, the psychology of accidents, the self-punishment compulsion," we realize that it is through our deepest desires that we make connection with external events.

The psychological interest passes over into the mythical at that psychological depth where we desire to repeat mythical patterns. Life at its intensest is repetition. Mann tells us that the ego of antiquity became conscious of itself by taking on the identity of a hero or a god and walking in his footsteps.

Mann also helps us understand the comic element in this view of life as repetition. For he describes the characters of his *Joseph* as puppets who know they are puppets reeling off, in the hoaxing of Esau the Red, for example, "a plot abiding from past time and now again present in a jest." The effect is actually, as Mann makes clear, tragicomic; for Mann's characters feel the emotions they know they are representing. The word of Mann's that best describes this quality is "blithe"; for the word implies in Mann's context the triumph over difficulties, the triumph of comedy over tragedy. It is this blitheness—"a blithe skepticism . . . a mistrust that unmasks all the schemes and subterfuges of our own souls"—that Mann sees as Freud's contribution to the art and humanism of the future. The mythical view, says Mann, although it came early in the life of the race, is in the life of the individual "a late and mature" view.

In describing in *The Anatomy of Criticism* the mythoi of tragedy and comedy, Northrop Frye tells us that we reconcile ourselves to tragedy, which is the myth of autumn or death, because it

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leads by implication to comedy, which is the myth of spring or rebirth. If Frye is right, then tragicomedy ought to be the vehicle of the complete or ultimate vision—which may be why Greek tragedy finished with the tragicomedies of Euripides, and why Shakespeare finished by writing those curious last plays that illustrate better than anything else in literature the ripeness or blitheness of which Mann speaks.

One recalls in connection with the last plays Sir Philip Sidney's remark that old writers love the marvelous. One recalls, too, the tragic gaiety that is the hard-won achievement of the aged Yeats in his last poems. I shall conclude by discussing a few poems in which Yeats both defines and answers questions about identity that are distinctive of twentieth-century literature.

All through his career, Yeats was concerned with the question of how you get over from the flesh-and-blood creature to the mythical person who puts forth those magical powers from which all value and culture derive. In "Easter 1916," he expresses his amazement that the people, whom he knew as quite ordinary flesh-and-blood people, have now been translated into some other extraordinary sphere of being by their participation in the heroic and tragic events of the Easter Rebellion. And the point about the Easter Rebellion is that it was, in the uselessness and excessiveness of its sacrifice, like a work of art; so that these people have stepped into a tragic story.

In one of the *Last Poems,* a poem called "Beautiful Lofty Things," Yeats recalls in the life of certain friends one specific moment in which that person revealed his essence and thus turned himself, right there in life, into a mythical figure. The poem closes with:

> Maud Gonne at Howth station waiting a train,
> Pallas Athene in that straight back and arrogant head:
> All the Olympians; a thing never known again.

As applied to real people in real life, the question of identity comes down to this. Where, among the different aspects we show to people, and among the metamorphoses we pass through in the different stages of our life, is our identity? Yeats deals with this

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question most completely in "Among School Children," where in visiting a girls' school he realizes with a shock that the little girls are staring "in momentary wonder" at "a sixty-year-old smiling public man"—a man quite different from the man Yeats thinks of as himself. He feels the great distance between himself and the girls until he remembers Maud Gonne, the woman he has always loved, as a young woman, and finally has a vision of her as just such a little girl as these. "Her present image," that of a worn old woman, comes to mind, and his "heart is driven wild" by the thought of the passing stages of her life and his. Where among the metamorphoses is the real person?

Yeats begins his answer by asking a question that contains its own answer. What mother, he asks, would think giving birth worthwhile could she see the "shape upon her lap"—and Yeats uses the word "shape" because he will not commit himself on where the real person is to be found—"With sixty or more winters on its head"? Yeats has now to account for the obvious answer to his question—that mothers do in fact think giving birth worthwhile. He finds his explanation not in philosophical theories about the nature of reality—for theories are as much victims of change as flesh itself—but in the image. "Both nuns and mothers worship images." The mother worships the flesh-and-blood "shape upon her lap"; the nun, the marble statue of the Holy Infant—because each object refers to the other. The nun's statue can break the heart because it refers to the flesh-and-blood shape; the mother can love the flesh-and-blood shape because she refers it to the marble archetype—she knows, as we all do, that some continuing principle, some single identity, will bind together its various phases. Both nun and mother, in other words, worship the same combination of archetype and flesh-and-blood, the same image. But it is also *because* they worship that each can see through the object before her to the combination.

The questions with which the poem ends are couched in images that make possible only one answer.

> O chestnut tree, great-rooted blossomer,
> Are you the leaf, the blossom or the bole?

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O body swayed to music, O brightening glance,
How can we know the dancer from the dance?

The chestnut tree exists in all its parts and phases; the dancer *qua* dancer cannot be known except through the movements of the dance. The images combine nature and art, flux and the fixed idea —reminding us again that an identity is an incarnation, a filling in of an unchanging form with transient life. The whole principle of the form, the stillness, is contained in any phase of the life or movement—provided only that the intensity of the life is made manifest in that particular phase or, what comes to the same thing, that the particular phase is *seen* intensely. The final lines are explained by Yeats's remark in his *Autobiography* about "true Unity of Being, where all the nature murmurs in response if but a single note is touched."

In the poems I have dealt with so far, Yeats moves from the life to the myth. But in two of the *Last Poems,* in "Municipal Gallery Revisited" and "A Bronze Head," he moves from the myth back to the life. In "Municipal Gallery," he sees paintings of his friends and he realizes that they have already passed into the legendary Ireland "the poets have imagined terrible and gay," and that the legend is the essential truth about them and Ireland. In "A Bronze Head," he sees a bronze-painted plaster bust of Maud Gonne in old age, a bust that makes her look mummy-dead and supernatural. The bronze head makes him think back to the vital young girl she once was, and he asks explicitly the question that is only implied in "Among School Children": "Which of her forms has shown her substance right?" The answer is that the mummy-dead head has its effect because it refers us back to the vital young girl; while the vital young girl, Yeats remembers, gave signs already of turning into this supernatural, staring, nonvital head—through her very excess of vitality, through a "wildness" so intensely natural as to seem supernatural.

In "Lapis Lazuli," the greatest of the *Last Poems,* Yeats shows how this idea about identity combines with a principle of repetition to make for the tragicomic attitude—for tragic gaiety. In answer to the political-minded women he knew, who thought that

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poets like himself were superficially gay in the face of the pressing dangers of the times, Yeats talks first about the tragic theater. The sum of tragedy does not increase, Yeats says, with the number of people involved in catastrophes. There is no greater amount of tragedy in the world than the tragedy that happens to Hamlet or Lear. It is because the tragic poet knows this, because he collapses all the diverse troubles in the world into the tragedy of a single archetypal figure who walks through the paces of a representative action—an action representing "All men have aimed at, found and lost"—it is for this reason that the actors who play Hamlet and Lear

> Do not break up their lines to weep.
> They know that Hamlet and Lear are gay;
> Gaiety transfiguring all that dread.

The actors know that Hamlet and Lear are like themselves actors, who are consciously—because the author's consciousness is in them, they are partly at least marionettes at the service of the author's consciousness—repeating the paces of a given action. Hamlet and Lear are, like actors, gay with the aesthetic satisfaction of seeing the whole play at every point of it, of knowing that the action is moving toward its necessary conclusion. The mystery by which gaiety transfigures dread is the mystery not only of art but of the human mind which in all its endeavors assimilates the disorder and violence of day-to-day existence to its own triumphant patterns.

Yeats makes this clear in the next stanza where he shows the same transfiguring principle of repetition in history itself. Through some deep historical instinct that accounts for the continuity of civilization, we know that "All things fall and are built again," which is why "those that build them again are gay."

Finally, Yeats brings history and art together by reminding us of the blithe wisdom of an ancient civilization like that of China—a wisdom reflected in Chinese art, in the little lapis lazuli medallion that the poet has set out to celebrate. The point is that all wisdom and all art aspire to the quality of Chinese wisdom and art as reflected in the medallion. And the quality of the medallion is perfectly tragicomic. For although the Chinamen on the medal-

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lion stare upon a "tragic scene," and "One asks for mournful melodies," their response is the smiling, comic comprehension that includes and transcends all tragic knowledge:

> Their eyes mid many wrinkles, their eyes,
> Their ancient, glittering eyes, are gay.

Magic and art, says Yeats in his essay "Magic," manifest "the power of many minds to become one." "At whatever risk," he says, we artists "must cry out that imagination is always seeking to remake the world according to the impulses and the patterns in that Great Mind, and that Great Memory." The point is important because tragedy collapses the sort of diverse disasters that are reported in the newspapers into the single disaster that is assimilated to the patterns of the Great Mind and the Great Memory. And it is this transformation that transforms dread into gaiety.

We are back, in other words, to the connection Mann makes between the open-ended ego of antiquity and the tragicomic view of life as repetition. We are also back to what Mann says about the blithe humanism of the future. For it is true that Freud and Jung have, through the concept of the unconscious, connected the mind with external forces—forces that are cultural, biological and even in the end physical. Because of this extension, we are nowadays able to accept truths about our hidden desires and subterfuges that would be unendurable if we had to think of the ego as simply conscious and individual. We are being led back, I think, to a mood of acceptance like the old tragic fatalism, but an acceptance that, because it will be based on knowledge rather than ignorance, should result not in the fear in which the world was anciently bound, but in confidence.

We have been so absorbed by the negative things our modern writers have been saying, that we have hardly caught up as yet with what they have been telling us in a positive way. Our best writers have not been moaning over the so-called "loss of the self"—which is really the loss of the inadequate nineteenth-century *idea* of the locked-up autonomous, magically potent self that never could sustain the high claims made for it when it was regarded as the one remaining source of value in a world where value

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was no longer objective. It is perhaps appropriate that the current loss-of-self writers live in Paris; for they have, in their disillusionment with the high nineteenth-century claims for the self, fallen back upon attitudes of the French Enlightenment. Robbe-Grillet gives us the self as a mechanical recorder of sensations. Sarraute gives us something like La Rochefoucauld's brilliantly comic reduction of motives to an automatic pursuit of a nasty, piddling kind of self-interest. Beckett returns to Descartes's idea of the self as a locked-up thinking box cut off not only from other selves but from its own body as well. To avoid phoniness, these writers have, as an ironical comment on the nineteenth-century ideal, reduced the self to a mere twitch.

Our best writers, however, are twentieth-century romanticists who have managed to sustain the potency of the self by joining it to powerful outside forces—by recognizing, for example, that the self is not, as the nineteenth-century romanticists tended to think, opposed to culture, but that the self is a cultural achievement, that it is as much outside us as inside, and that the self exists outside us in the form of cultural symbols. In assimilating ourselves, therefore, to these symbols or roles or archetypes, we do not lose the self but find it. When writers are as deliberate and self-conscious as this, however, in bridging the gap between the individual and the culture that seemed to make tragedy impossible, the art they come out with may have or suggest the richness, depth and complexity of tragedy, but it must be in its final effect comic or rather tragicomic. That is why tragicomedy would seem to be the characteristically modern style in literature.

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ROSALIE COLIE

Atlantic Wall

(To J.: this cock for Asclepias)

I

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At the low edge between the land and sea,
The reaching sea past sight and past the past,
We sit, a lackland king and queen, and stare
Into the salt seawind. Each night the sun
Puts on her western show, each night goes down
A golden hole from this world to the next.
O I come backward from the last new world
To the last-but-one. You came back too—
A mole impaled upon a giant prong
Brought wriggling from the chilly underworld,
Or silent Orpheus harrowed out of hell,
A cinder from a burnt-off garden raked
Back where light makes love and gardens grow.

I bicycled to meet you, past
An avenue where sphinxes keep
Their stone eyes shut and lips drawn up
Contented in their sleep.

(I asked them no questions.
They told me no lies.)

The pictures in their seven heads
Were identical, it seems.
This continent is safe in
The sphinxes' secret dreams.

Our century is half a century old.
I know in part the things I can be told.

I passed the war in worry and in ease.
Believe me, love: protection is not peace.

Like Venus, I was born upon the water;
On Charon's wayward ferry into life
I came to life (naked, crying hither),
Drew my first breath afloat between the lands.
Now, borne across the sea to you, like Venus
Thus I came—and there the likeness ends.
If democrats descend from goddesses,
Why then, a sterner lady blessed my birth:
Strange birds have drawn me here and there, but not
Alassing turtledoves. The saw-whet owl
Sat on my childhood's shoulder, blinked her eyes
At all the books I read. In our barn
The barn owls turned their vast eternal heads
Entirely around, entirely quiet.
The wisest bird, my darling, knows no more
Than we can read from books.
Back from the wars
A blindfold Mars, you lean against the wall
Listening for the curlew and the cricket,
Hearing the snail, his house upon his back,
Slick his whispering trail to where each night
He stops and pitches camp. The snail is all
A snail really needs; hermaphrodite,
Complex and implicate, how hard it was
To draw the snail, dissected, for the class!
Inside and out, he was too beautiful
And baffling to draw. I know I never,
Even then, dared comprehend a snail.

Today I think he is his art and craft.
He satisfies himself, he takes his life
Exactly where he finds himself, and dies
Beneath his own eccentric monument.

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A creature's concentration is himself;
What he is, is his whole occupation.

Across this watershed of dunes that net
The water for the land, the wind carves webs;
The waves set featherstitchings in the sand,
Leave lace of runback water, openwork
Trimming the ragged selvage of this world.

The nets are spread to dry beside the harbor
Where skippers' wives complain and cackle as
Their shuttles weave the multitudinous haul.

The lenses raised the snail's veins to such
A basketry as you would not believe!
A net of blood confirms the snail's life.

Caught in our net of nerves, we come awake
To just such mockery as Vulcan cast
Across his pretty wife and Mars, enmeshed
Sufficiently in one another's sense.
The loves of gods and snails are poor exemplars.
Hephaistos forged that final net of gold—
Thin as his wife's fair hair, but strong enough
To hold all warfare with all cause for war.
Quite a catch to trawl for and bring home!

What if Plato's fantasy were true?
If the lame smith stumbled on us here,
Dare we ask his art? Could we prove
Sufficiently entangled in each other
To warrant welding our two nets to one?
Are we to piece each other out? to join
Our empty diamonds in knots? If so,
And if not just a fantasy of love,
For Vulcan's forge our metal must be true.

When Orpheus took his fiddle down to hell,
He went to find his concentrated love.
At the gatehouse, all his gear was taken,
Marked with his name, and tumbled in a bag.
Eurydice, with others in a boxcar,
Had been resettled in another place.
Young Orpheus was not put in the band.
No brambles came to bloom that spring. The rose
At Christmas failed. The squirrels went away.

Angels of death stood at the chimney-corners,
Folded tight their lips and arms, and spread
Enormous wings against the winter sky.
The emptied skulls on sticks drilled every day,
Swilled their soup, gnawed their twigs and roots,
Ate grass like Chrysostom and other men
Flung on all fours. The long-haired angels posted
Here and there with urgent messages
From their absconded God. O God how long—
I do not ask how long this flesh and blood
Can stand it: only, how long must it stand?

Italian farmers, slow behind slow oxen,
Have always turned up legs and arms and heads—
One sandaled foot, broken at the ankle,
Is worth three harvests. Buried Aphrodite
Petrified comes back to light all maimed.
The scholar's stonegraft on her teaches us
What we already know: a rebuilt love
Will never cause a man to catch his breath.

Under the owl's nest the skulls of mice,
The bones of birds, the snail shells fall in heaps.
More than once, I have reeled in a fish
Whose crimson gills still worked, although just forward
Of his tail, the pirate barracuda
Had bitten him clean off. When Grendel died,
The salmon pool turned red; the shearing fish
Pursued each other and consumed themselves.

Our net of blood confirms our human life.
Christ the trawler, braced against the mast,
Draws up His net and all our tumbling lives.

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I used to watch the tuna, mossbunker,
The mullet, mackerel, and the close-mouthed shark
Lunge in the seine—all beauty and all blood
Turned out upon the beach. The fish-pound hand
—because I was so small, and terrified
That all the fish still lived—gave me, to have,
A sea horse skeleton. In any haul
We mortals make, there is a little love.

ii

Though walls give warranty from harms
The cities yield like helpless farms
And one by one, as drummer boy
Goes grey, the towns go down like Troy.
At Hexham winter frost and snow
Breached the Wall and laid it low;
Beneath the vines at Carcassonne
The walls were stone by stone undone.
The stalwart walls put up to save
Ghent lie buried in their grave.
Strassburg gave, and only God
Can count the stones at Novgorod.
All Europe was a fortress when
This wall was raised by inland men
In herds, who built above the tide
A prison with themselves inside.
The Frisians stared into the eyes
In Tartar faces; their surprise
Those Tartars shared, that women should
Be so fair, yet run red blood.
Their fellows saw the masons fall.
The blood ran out beneath the wall.
From Norway to the hills of Spain
The wall went up in snow and rain
A dungeon for the discontent
Of this rigid continent,
Immuring behind cliffs of flame
Speckled sorrow, shrewder shame
Than men can pack upon their backs.
Now the turret heels and cracks
Above our picnic in its shade.
Our presence is a panic raid
Against the curlew overhead
Who goes and comes in mother's dread
For curlew chicks. The cricket calls
And calls again as evening falls;
At home, the katydids' refrain
Sings evensong. How close the crane
Has come to death! The fat heath hen
To the last bird went down to men;
The names our towns and rivers have
Intone the Algonquins' epitaph.
When men are occupied with war
On men, wild habits change no more
Than any salmon's run can change
Or Arctic tern curtail his range.
But from the pair that found all day
Encyclopedias to say
We have altered slightly still;
Have learned, behind this sandy hill,
To shift our packs of guilt. Older
By a day today and colder
Now than in the noonday sun,
We feel how far the salmon run,
The distances from pole to pole
The tern must cover. The world is whole
For every fish and bird. Two sparrows
Collect our picnic crumbs; space narrows
Life to what it is—the name
We give our ocean is the same,
My love. The wheeling curlew's cry
Forgives us both. One expiation
Left is love, for lives carved by
The cutting edge of occupation.

iii

Adam one primeval spring
  Christened plant and brute.
We hope the Babel names we bring
Can recompose our Eden whole:
The *wielewaal* is oriole,
  The diving grebe the *fuut*.

Our lips repeat responses to
  Love's Linnaean creed;
The canticles we sing are due
To words' irregularity.
(From the sixteenth century
  My ancestors could read.)

Oak and spruce have never flourished
  In gardens built on sand.
The gingham land where you were nourished
Affords me insufficient cover:
My forebears logged my birthright over
  My logged-over land.

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I am a protestant like you
And come of rebel stock.
For us, no language translates true,
No common currency is coined,
But still we trust the counterpoint
When we whistle Bach.

The cool conjunctions of our breath
Reconstruct the passion.
All dwellers in these dunes know death
Which shows up sharp against the sky.
Later, we'll stand up, who lie
Composed beside the ocean.

From my heart's huge surge and hurl
I learn I must believe
What every mother tells her girl,
The grief that every daughter knows—
This tinker's pack of troubles goes
Back to mother Eve.

Lullay, my liking, my dear, my love,
How can your bone and blood,
Your bitter breath and heartbeat move
So softly, afterwards, in rest?
Adam, like the robin's nest,
Was built of sticks and mud.

iv

From then to now there is no bridge.
From there to here we laid no road.
The wind upon this seaward ridge
About the turning world has blown;
The same seaweed has ebbed and flowed,
Flowed and ebbed, and all alone

One oystercatcher hunts the rocks.
The ghosts of homesick soldiers haunt
This fortress, where the gulls in flocks
Formed their strict societies
Throughout the war, as if to flaunt
The rights of aborigines.

I know the sun sets in the west,
Am reconciled to watch it fall
At sea. The beams the beacons cast
Come, go black, and come again.
Light and dark by turns is all
Vicissitude reserved to men.

This is you. I know your name,
My darling, though the days and nights
Never quite come back the same.
The fishing fleets far out to sea
Cast wide their nets. The lighthouse lights
Each time a different person: me.

II

i

(For E. T. C.)

The hoodwinked sons fly up and lean to look.
The earth turns every day. The cities tilt
Amazingly, when sudden secrets shook
The labyrinths their fathers' fathers built.

They saw no answers. Mazes are designed
For insight only. At Chartres and other places
The labyrinths to paradise are blind.
The maps we cannot read are always mazes.

When you were two, racing in the dapples
Under the orchard, twenty years from harms,
You skidded in the plushy windfall apples,
Slewed into a laughing lady's arms.

At ten you fell from higher—from the sky,
Or from the birch. You built a Dido's pyre
In the haybarn. Lad, you flew so high!
—You told the tallest tales!—You played with fire.

Your stars whirl in the stereopticon
Of space. Your rivers run in water mains.
The wrinkled mountain ranges pivot on
Their axes. Winds uproot the citied plains.

The ladybugs all check and veer toward home:
The raiders come like swarms of silver bees:
The molten bronzefalls down the gilded dome
Bowl Catherine wheels around the chestnut trees.

Imperial crowns of fire come tumbling down
Upon the ferris wheel. The children's laughter

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Rolls hoops around the somersaulting
town;
Jack with Jill comes tumbling, tumbling af-
ter.

The angels' trumpets blown to raise the
dead
Scatter the quick like chipmunks to their
holes.
The blind play leapfrog. The sick man
takes his bed
And runs a mile. Madmen swim in shoals.

The bridges blow like clematis, and ashes
Hang rambler roses on the falling spires.
All bushes burn. The campanile crashes.
No curfew tolls to cover these wild fires.

The beams achieve their cross. The long
knives spray
Their fountains on the sky.—My bare foot
learned
Upon a sparkler, the pain in such display:
On every Glorious Fourth, a child is
burned.

You burnt your hand on matches, child,
which proves
How hard you fired your clay in your de-
sire.
Lord Vulcan is the god of fire. Who loves
War is married to the god of fire.

In Central Park, I saw a phoenix once—
Really a pheasant, but a bird of gold
Self-burnt, self-burnished, whose extrava-
gance
Kindled the young and made the old look
old.

The tongue-tied fathers see their sons come
down
Like phoenixes, like lightning, from the
sky.
No lightning ever forks up from the ground
And grounded phoenixes, like pheasants,
die.

Now Icarus who fell from pride of place
Lies in the hay like any fallen boy.
O rider on the stallion-winded space,
O burning haycock harvester, my joy,
Lie still at last! When you left, the drenched
Meadow winked a million fireflies' warning
That fall must come when summer's fires
are quenched.
Their valediction zeroed in on mourning.

The boys lost in the clouds have all come
back
To walk this world like revenants from
another.
O younger sons who burnt the summers
black,
Remember that high flier, that firefly
brother!

ii

Architects all play in scale.
By duplicity
Inigo the nonpareil
Solved Apollo's puzzle.
He simply made the pure cube double
Quite domestically.

Bronze and marble monuments
Are guaranteed by rhyme.
In Delft, the silence is immense
Where the princes sleep;
The clockwork stones at Stonehenge keep
Still, and tell no time.

The fire that made a day of night
Made room for Wren's clean town.
Good and beautiful and bright,
He stayed the endless knell
To raise his city, knowing well
How cities are brought down.

Quiet children used to play
Marbles by the wall.
The children's voices blow away
Today across the rubble;
Our children hide and seek in trouble,
Pretend to fall, and fall.

Bruegel's solemn children never
Turn to tell their names;
Squatting on the grass forever
Or always on the run,
They pursue as if in fun
Purgatorial games.

Deprived of sex, the "It" must tag
The weakest it can see:

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Finders cannot keep: the bag
Of pureys is a dream:
At suppertime, the children scream
That all may come in free.

The baby builds a house of blocks
Higher than its head.
At Avebury, one of the rocks
(Called Adam) fell alone,
And like a grub beneath that stone,
A perfect man lay dead.

Wren built modestly, and yet
To make his meaning clear
On his cathedral altar set
This message from his hand,
"If you seek my monument,
Look about you here."

Man constructs his history by
His stubborn sublimation.
At Uppsala the dead lie high
However low their act:
Stonehenge is a mortal fact
Of prestidigitation.

Across the bombsite of my fears
Upon a wall, I found
Marked off the inches of our years—
The measurements of skilled
Architects engaged to build
Ourselves up from the ground.

iii

The roof blew off one night, and daisies have
Seeded the choir and nave. Scarlet and blue
Bloom on the buttress. —How Piranesi knew
The extra pain haphazard planting gave
To ruins! This was the poet Milton's grave
Who hammered till his handiwork rang true,
Who clamored through his busy days and through
The dark: braving ruin makes men brave.

Though Milton's monument is gone, and gone
His church, of gentle Giles who tamed the deer,
Gardens grow to regain ground once lost:
From ruin this ragged paradise has grown;
This eyebright in the fallen stones can clear
Our blindness from these tears, from our own dust.

iv

The century's sixtieth birthday is today—
Old beaten warrior century, time to quit
Your tricks! I saw your light of love just now
As I ducked by. I saw that old camp follower,
That skipping witch named for her nubile youth,
The crone Europa. She winked as I went by,
Bunched up her skirt and scratched her scrawny shank
With the switch she uses on her skinny cows
To keep them from the public highway. She winked,
I tell you. She did. She jerked her thumb and laughed.
Her teeth are gone, all right, but that old girl
Gives better than she got, even today:
She grinned. Your birthday! She remembers better
Your better, older days.
Europe, Europe
You had your great times then! Slide your hand
Under my elbow; tell me how it was—
Demure fourteen, you rode your cock-and-bull
Cockhorse out of your father's house, and rode
Your course to this old age. O parse for me
The verb that is the story of your life:

All the randy cocks and bulls,
All the hobby horses raced
From sunup to sundown.

We raced to place our bets.
All our horses lost.
I lost; you lost;

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He, she, it lost.
Even they lost
(Oh, they lost the lot!).
And we lost, girl.
Good God, girl, how we lost!

III

i

Northern summer days are long;
From earth's underside
Slant light keeps coming on
Into the night.

Down the long hall's endless dimness
To your room of glass
I wheel the full forgiveness
You never ask.

Once upon a glassy mountain
A princess sat
Holding her breath and counting
The horsemen on the flat.

One, then the next came off their marks,
Set their steeds to it.
The iron shoes struck sparks;
Couldn't do it.

I forget how one of them succeeded,
Or by what trick
One smart young man stampeded
Up that hill to its tip.

He thawed the lady by his kissing,
Tobogganed with her down.
They knelt for parents' blessing
Then left town.

At your lintel of light, I stumble
Blinded by the glass,
Meet your eyes and mumble
One word to pass.

ii

In the late sun's level rays
Between your knees your hands hang down.
The spectacles through which you gaze
Mirror all this glass around:
You stare at nothing, while your mind
Makes something of the things you find.

The slides in boxes and the jars
Filled with mortal bits of selves,
Labeled, polished up like stars,
Shine and glitter on the shelves.
It seems as if we see straight through
All substance to what must be true.

What else does light shine through like this?
The darningneedles' double flight,
Doubled in the water, gives
Such transparency to sight.
I see that life is what I see—
The lighthouse used to turn on me.

The sunlight lances what floats free,
Transforms the jellies rigged for death
To rainbows and to radiancy.
On the beach, we held our breath
And watched the living wafers run
Away to nothing to the sun.

You do not know the thing you seek.
Lives that claim to live, are lies:
They're dying—O I cannot speak
The secret I cannot surprise!
Your eyes are huge behind your lenses.
Your white coat buttons in your senses.

We thought we saw each other's core:
Each other. Now we keep quite clear
Of candor, but work all the more
Inside ourselves to clean out fear.
Dear, no technician's term of art
Describes one secret of the heart.

Sometimes all that love can show
Is that all our loves displease.
Certainly we never know
What ease is, or what disease;
If you or I should want to climb
That hill of glass, there'd be no time.

In reason's low cathedral here
All the glass is also stained
With every cross our bodies bear.
By death our lives may be explained.
Your eyes fixed on the microscope
Can see, perhaps, some hope for hope.

iii

Through autumn's arbors, laces for dry vines,

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The brown, the brittle trellises of mist,
Thin birds fly south upon their empty bones
On empty air, in elegiac quest.

Between the fractures, slits, and vacancies
Of saying and unsaying, odds and ends,
Taking our unintentional holidays
Off-season, lonely, at our own expense,

We live in the vacations of ourselves—
Holes where our hearts have hammered through our lives,
Our ribs split wicker baskets, our thin skulls
Oiled-paper lamps to hold our lightless eyes.

Our mouths are now unclappered bells that last
Summer sang all day; of all their sweet
Our honeycombs of sense are emptied. We cast
The shadow of an insect's shell; we meet

As ghosts do ghosts, slip like light through glass,
Like birds through leaves, like fingerlings through nets,
Like water through the weir; like nothing pass
Through nothing. Each chink, knot, lattice lets

Us out and through. Each loop marks off how free
Our passage is: as empty air meets air
Or dark the dark: as lost Eurydice
Meets Lazarus gladly dead upon the stair.

iv

In Mantua the duke and duchess go
On as always. Their schools of servants move
Up and down the steps. The children know
The classic horses are afoot, to prove
This pageantry is real. Above the show
The peacock shines upon the palace roof.
—And could these profiles, if the bird should cry,
Look up into the perfect painted sky?

This household has survived five hundred years
Locked in one room. The daughter's long daydreams,
The dwarf's resentment and the parents' fears
Domesticate with grace. The peacock's screams
Swell his long throat, but not a person hears,
Such order has been laid upon extremes.
The painter drew the children's steady look,
But not their names, nor the privacies they took.

The children put away their tinsel things
To mime in stately cloth-of-gold charades;
Off-stage and silently, the poet sings
Eclogues from the ruined colonnades,
Preoccupied with old imaginings.
For the philippic children, cavalcades
Of pinioned stallions swept across the rise,
To snatch them up and break through mackerel skies.

The hobbyhorse entangled in his reins
Lies in the dust: the toothless grooms are gone
Mumbling down to dark: the horses' manes
About their brittle skeletons are wound.
After the bombs, the painted room remains.
The stricken duchess stares the future down;
The yearning nurse foresees the frost, and sees
The milkweed on the wind, the falling leaves.

Who knows the day creation first began?
The games that God played as a little child?
The thoughtful man in glasses once outran
Long trolley cars of pain. Mantegna spoiled
His mother's wall with scribbling; verses can
Impose some measure on the broken world.
A roundsong is the poet's lonely game,
And Pegasus his rocking horse again.

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IV

i

Rain: the river brims to overflow.
Cock robin tuning up his strings for spring
Takes higher ground. Geese gabble, tramp, take wing,
The seven swans stretch seven necks to go,
And go. They leave us here: the snow
With water falls in jabots, and
Makes midland seas of this plowed, quilted land.

By night, the rutting river spreads and spills
Huge boulders chopping, ending up and down
A stonehenge in each field. Around, around
The stream stones mill themselves to dust. The hills
Lodge mole and weasel, and none kills
Another as their *Lebensraum*
Goes underneath the combers and the foam.

The birds and creatures have no time for prayers.
Each hedgerow, dike, and tree becomes an ark
Beleaguered by the flood, the foundering dark.
All night they come and come, told off in pairs.
Astounded shrews and dormice, hares
With paper ears and eyes of glass
Stare through the stubble at the pike and bass.

The final freeze: then utmost morning broke
To find the otters sledding on the ice,
Émigrés from chocked-up holes. Like dice
Twigs rattled on the wind. Higher than hope
The coasting buzzards cruised and spoke
Their tuneless lines across the sky
Waiting for the refugees to die.

Beneath the mud the frogs and lizards slept
Intact inside their democratic graves.
The freckled trout, the pickerel in the waves
Above the plowland stopped quite dead, were kept
On ice and under glass. Frost set
The scene with brush and palette knife,
Blew on it, froze it stiff to this still life.

Huddled in our overcoats, we stand
Abridged upon the dike, the molten sun
A ricecake circle rounder than that drawn
By the shepherd boy. This reach of land
That was the anchored ark we manned
Alone, dear love, has closed us out
And closed upon the lizard and the trout.

From a cottage suddenly, a clock
Alarmed the icebound animals and birds.
The folded sheep all show their teeth; the herds
Of horses steam and whinny, while a flock
Of sparrows spins from rock to rock.
The widow who lives here alone
Set off in flight, two days ago, by train,

Leaving this lifeless world to cold and us.
From our glass hill, as far as eyes can see,
Our landscape is all glass, all verity.
Just as Japan, just as the desert was
Simplified to sheets of glass,
So have our stopped-up hearts, our blood
Gone hard to ice, and vitrified from flood.

The cold conclusion of it all, is this:
The world is fixed for life and for our death
—And O my love, my love, our human breath
Perhaps may fire our crystal hearts; this kiss
Crack the universe of ice
Across, until it deliquesce,
Transmute, transform, reverberate to glass.

ii

Pieter Bruegel's dandy lancers
Elegant in hose
And doublet killed like ballet dancers.
The villagers bereft
Watched these men dispose
Like partridges of children left
Skewered in the snows.

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Why is this picture terrible?
It surely makes the best
It can of things unbearable.
No wauling from the boys,
Nor from one mother's breast
A single howl of grief destroys
Its absolute arrest.

I knew, just short of ten years old,
All Traherne had known:
The emptiness this world can hold.
Shod like whitefoot mouse
In sneakers, thin, ungrown,
I stood inside my parents' house
Terribly alone.

Europe's dark-eyed children all
Received their elders' ration.
Their skins and twisted bones appall—
O whose consciences,
For this, escape a lashing?
Scholars know the mousetrap is
An instrument of passion.

Even Swift, whose family life
Left him less than sweet,
For children sharpened up his knife
On words to cure or kill.
The starvelings in the street
Stare, while at Thyestes' meal
We sit down and eat.

From the second that they come
Into this jurisdiction
Children cannot slide safe home.
Where rule of law is wild
No child escapes conviction—
Not one, for heaven's sake! God's child
Was spared for crucifixion.

iii

How can we predict our pose?
When an end had come to sense
My darling laughed and blew his nose.
I lived to learn I nearly died;
My darling very nearly cried.
We play the parts our childhoods chose
To unromantic bitter ends.
When I went birding on the marsh, the wrens
Had hysterics, but the bitterns froze.

The actor in you always tried
To do the very best he knew
And genuinely is surprised
When noble gestures he intends
Become the means to meaner ends.
I told the truth and knew I lied:
Your lying turned out to be true.
The secret you taught me I leave to you:
What is meant is never what's implied.

My knowledge threatens all I knew.
The angles of the light decide
That buntings shall be black or blue.
The noon makes prisms of the crows;
Thin soil fades the deepest rose.
The beautiful is good, it's true,
But seldom true. A poet's pride
Lies in his throat: the image you denied
Is the best that I can make of you.

Riddle this: on what depends
Our choice of speech in verse or prose?
My message to you always sends
My love: the day the shad run through
The anglers must stand ready too.
All poets share the salmon's sense
Of time. The banded snow goose shows
Where love has wintered; our metaphors expose
Us where our loneliness is most intense.

Against the chipmunks, walls are no defense.
Like poems, the shad run up, the river flows.
Poets, fishermen, and lovers bide
Their luck. Time and again the best we do
Undoes the bridegroom and his alien bride
Till love flows in, and makes our language true.

iv

In the mountains, smugglers' goods are lives.
Styles are packed in knapsacks. The gentian pays
No custom and ignores the pass. *Le roi soleil*
Stayed gallican by virtue of his hills.
England is an island. In her sea

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Thin swimmers churn their paddle wheels
and puff;
Each dawn the squidding quixotes cast
their lots
To hook deep into fear. Up the estuary
The vikings came like skuas, drove the
gulls
Into a narrower valley. The greenest trout
Take the same flies on both sides of the
Alps.
The mountains last and send their rivers
down—
The towering Mont Ventoux of love still
pours
Out of her secret cellarage to fill
The poet's brook that bears the heart
away,
That carries off our loves into the sea.

The saxifrage puts down its roots in rock
To split the mountain sheer. This grimpen
drops
Blind down, where magic crampons cannot
hold.
Men are not nailed to mountains any more.
Released, Prometheus stretched his wrists
and thighs,
Then knelt to warm his hands at the camp-
fire.
O *crèvecoeur* Christ upon your seasoned
cross!
O rock-ribbed Adam! both your stony sides
Split open in the labor of my birth.
Adam issued in his birthday Eve,
And Eve came to her term at census-time:
All the Eves born to their mothers since
Have split their sides on love. There is no
ark
For Eve. In the canoe of her own skin
She rides the shoals, the knifing reefs, she
rides
The rapids, runs, the springs and falls of
love.

v

Our eyes at last close out the light:
This bed lapped by the dark
Rocked you to sleep, a steady ark
Empty of every pair but us. I, quite
Empty of all but you,
Observe the figured dark the ghosts walk
through,
Take bearings as I need not do
If I could see beyond you, love. The night
Havens my landless heart against the light.

How long can mortals bear the dark?
On Plato's cave the light
Threw moving counterfeits of sight
As thick as hidebound primitives could
mark.
Still, in his limestone cave
Some browless Pyrenean Noah gave
The lie to Greece: his murals save
Whole herds of nameless beasts. Let me
embark
With him upon the density of dark!

The ghosts that shine inside the dark
Are far too fine for light—
Even the glimmer from the white
Of my black eye alarms: the log's last spark,
The pigmy constellations
Upon the chimney-back exhaust their pa-
tience.
Ghosts die in light's reticulations.
O shifting light beneath the bridge's arc,
How light your light makes light, how
dark the dark!

The looking glass by day or dark
Reverses life. By light
The mirrored mirror gives insight
To endlessness where ends are stark;
The camera obscura
Projects us upside down and backward,
purer
Than our purest fault. Now surer
Every night, the truth we live cuts sharp—
The more the light, the darker is the dark.

We sleep from curfew through to light
Together in the dark,
Then quicken and must draw apart
As day floods in with all its flotsam fright:
From fears, from perils of
The thronging night where love has lain,
we move
To open sight and seas of love.
By light of love, dear love, we bear down
night.
It is the dark, the dark, that makes the
light!

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V

(For two children: D.P.W. and J.M.H.)

All this is left behind—the fair-haired child
Calling from the quay, the child who shrills
Tonight across the waters widening now
Between himself and me, the child I lugged
Halfway to health, whose eye my elbow blacked
Playing a private game; the child who talked
Whole days I tried to write my will, who knew
Himself from me, from whom I knew myself:
This golden child I leave behind again.

The bridges on the Rhine are blown
And London Bridge is fallen down:
On the broken bridge at Avignon,
Elle fait comme ça, toujours comme ça!
O ladybug, ladybug, fly away home!
My heart is afire, your children will burn!
And sing, my love, my love, my love,
Tomorrow has been our dancing day!
Listen, dear child, to what I say:
All fair ladies always go away.

What legacy is left this child? He's got
A lot—Val d'Orcia timeless in the haze,
The hills Duke Frederick jingled through in thought,
Verona's high-school lovers and her bridge.
The winter-spell at Nîmes of water gardens
And Basel with all learning in one grave
Are his. The hedgehog, badger, lark and blackbird
Come out by night, sing through his summer dawns:
For them this water is too wide to cross.
O crystal childheart, clearer than the Lamb
Of God at Passiontide, how can I know,
When I am gone, just who you shall become?
Who else might you become if I could stay?
Old men at Troy were somehow boys like you—
This man who grew into a man, full grown
Through love and wars into himself, once looked
Upon the glass when his grey head was dark:
And I was never by for all that change,
Nor shall I know you when you comb white hair.
What lovers love, can any lover know?
O love upon your ultimate green island,
I know your habitat by heart! a dome,
A booming clock, a ring of stones, a wall,
A Publick Library where each book is verse
Scribbled by some lover's golden hand!
How can I leave thee, love, how leave that child
Whose legs I was, whose spindleshanks have stretched
His stride to twice my own?
The gulls cree-cree
Above this ship as every time they do,
But they come home to roost at home. At sea
The petrels are ironic company.

We take our daily walks in rain and shine.
We eat and drink too much. At evening, incline
To hear each other's secrets, true and false,
We sleep in the sun, play shuffleboard, and waltz.
I spend a lot of time, always, alone,
Glaring till the trespassers are gone,
Then sit and chew my pencil, changing words
About in rhymes, and waiting for the birds.
My head aches in the Gulf Stream from the fog.
A sailor walks a Pyrenean dog.
We pass the Banks. The sun goes down behind
The land at last; the homing gulls all find
The cove that harbors everlasting love
And mew from pilings, sheds, and masts. I move
Across the deck, my back to the New World

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Upon whose shores the sequent waves
have hurled
Since time was made, and since have
driven wild
With northeast storms the immigrant's
dumb child.
America! dear Never-never-land!
My scalding tears sting my sunburnt hand
Closed on the rail. The wind is in the east:
I know the hawks from herons now, at
least.
After the hurricane, in bare November,
The blossom on the Island bloomed. Re-
member,
The robins here are huge. Off Nantucket
Light
The spouting whale we thought we saw
was white.

* * *

All souls blow blindly in the mountain
mist.
The bells toll through the hallowed day.
We kissed
Halfway up the hill, halfway between
Salvation and those places where we've
been
Journeymen to love. On Halloween
I used to go disguised. This weather's
shroud
Blots me from myself, and blunts the loud
Cathedral bell that tells all Christian souls
The naked truth, their naked selves. It
tolls
For life and for all deaths; for you and me
Together now and, later, separately.
——Not *all* the saints; a stricter calendar
Mine is—with Jerome, special messenger
Charged to deliver God Almighty's Word,
Who dwelt in peace with lion, fox, and
gourd,
And fed God's creatures, took them for their
walk;
There's Chrysostom, whose golden bell of
talk,
Transformed all words back to his single
God.
I'd cast out Dominic, the toothèd dog,
But Benedict, that gardener and student,
I'd have to have; and freckled Bridget,
prudent
Irish girl whose watchdog was a wolf.
I'd claim a few who gave the Church a
rough
And tumble going-over—Arius, for one
(For one indeed), and proud Tertullian
With Origen, whose multiple mistakes
Wrote poems for centuries. St. Francis
makes
My peaceful zoo; Hubert, with his hounds
More elegant than mermaids, sees God's
wounds
Blossom from the stag. Each year's mid-
night
Comes Lucy, blind, to set the dark alight.
Cecilia leads all griefs to equipoise
And surcease in one mortal alto voice.
How can we tell the saint upon the street?
The wisest man you'd ever hope to meet
Looks like the village idiot at best.
My black and comely love went to his test
And failed it flat. At his own expense
Spinoza ground his life out on the lens
That looked on God. A hipless girl in
pants
Cropped her head, rode out to rescue
France,
And after sampling all the sins he could,
Augustine got around to being good.
Peter bought his reputation dear—
The rock that he became was split by fear.
Prince Lucifer was tall and fair of face,
And Judas the last instrument of grace.
Rivers never turn up stones to touch
For truth, and mirrors cannot tell us much.
Our faces look the same in love and lust:
All souls, all saints misspent their lives like
us.

From Michaelmas to Christmas
The daisies died and snow
Snuffed the burning asters,
Quenched the long hedgerow.

The holly and the ivy,
The boar's head and the bells
Cultivate a Christmas
Where cultivation tells:

The mistletoe is neutral,
The carols sweet and mild—
All's well, till smell of pine
Resurrects the child

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Swaddled, shrouded, buried,
In the scholar singing here
Who once, on Christmas morning,
Wept from greed, from fear.

This Christmas Eve I stumbled through the snow
(jinglebells and juggling all I know)
Bringing—since I am every ritual inch
Habit's handmaid—another china finch
To join the finches on my father's shelf,
The only thing I give him of myself.

God bless the master of this house,
The mistress also;
All the little children
Who round the table go
Are the solemn grownups who sit here and smoke
After the feast, revise the past, and joke.
Glazed and gleaming as their fat breasts caught
The candles on the tree, the birds I brought—
The foreign goldfinch and the foreign linnet—
Gaze at our garden and the wild birds in it.
Like Christmas decorations on the tree
The crossbills, grosbeaks, siskins all make free
With pine cones and such seed my mother set
Extra for Christmas; take all they can get,
Those feather balls, those pillagers, and give
Us notice: only living birds can live.

We walked from Christmas halfway out across
Our two lives, boy's and woman's, deep in snows.
Night falls at half-past four,
But in the frozen Midgard where we are
No northern lights tell north, no newborn star,
Nor lantern tells the door.

Black dwarfs in all this darkling white, we share
The fear of snow upon the iron air.
In evening's dialectic
The spectrum speaks extremes. The solid boy
Trudging here shall sweat through terms of joy,
Though cold is antiseptic.

Eased of their last disease, the dead below
The ridge of barrows heaped up by the snow
Sleep hard, sleep soft. Each mound
Chalks up its sum, addition and subtraction
Of fevergriefs and joys, preserved in traction,
In this obdurate ground.

Under snow, or when the planet's sheathed
In glass, the fact that you and I have breathed,
Dear love, our fill of air,
Makes an unlettered mark. Old World or New,
It's hazard: Vermont was named for Eden too.
Now is everywhere.

Midwinter strikes its claws deep into sorrow.
How can our dancing day dance in tomorrow?
The valentines are sent.
We watch our boxes till the post is sorted,
Then, our glasses from the frost distorted,
Watch Carnival meet Lent.

You, lion-hearted child, shall eat, I know,
Your chocolate valentines, and you shall grow
By turns both fat and lean.
Our skeletons come into fashion by
The winter. Men prepare for passion by
A bitter quarantine.

The cocks crow in each day of my denial.
They veer to mark me down: I come to trial
Guilty by decree.
O from my homesick heart from me exiled,
From my sack of stones, my stillborn child,
Good Lord, deliver me!

Too frail to make a jailbreak through the wall

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I mortared stone by stone myself, I call
My turn, my crooked part
And win—in the square dance of my death
A great imposthume burst inside my breast,
The wineskin of my heart.

By the steaming scarlet blood shed fresh
Upon the snow, within their starving flesh,
The hearts of men are mended.
Some miracles no reason can deny—
When chocolates fell, in spring, out of the sky,
The long war ended.

Lying awake at night, a sea apart
From my true love, I listened to my heart
Pound out iambics and my true love's name
Till nearly dawn. The wind changed, and there came
Straight through the roof of my apartment house,
Straight through six neighbors' ceilings, to arouse
Me from my single counting game, the cry
Of breeding geese. Our northbound geese fly high—
Those waveys honked a fogbound mile above
The bed I lay in measuring my love.
The goose's voice is measured too, but harsh.
Once, in the churchyard of a fenland marsh,
I saw among the names of men who fell
In France, an Edward Greygoose; turned to tell
The recollection that popped in my head:
"Geese mate for life, my dear," was what I said.
A pause. Your steady voice came in on cue
Exactly. "Is that the rule for ganders, too?"
It's taken my whole life to learn one thing—
For geese, only the ganders make the spring.

Now faint arbutus scrolled along the coast
Crawls northward, with the fat colonial ghost,
The Indian pipe. Skunk cabbage, sassy jack-
in-the-pulpit, and the dogwood, all come back
Each cold baptismal Appalachian spring.
The coon and possum, skunk and chipmunk bring
Their rebel life to life, but not to me:
O gentle Shenandoah! narrow Wild
Ammonoosuc, you have lost your child!
On the sandspit, in the sand dune's lee,
I see the lighthouse light go out as dawn
Begins at sea, and day comes slowly on.
My china eyes out of my brittle skull
Stare at the godwit, stare at the staring gull.
Thin as first light, thin as the cock's first crow,
Do I deny myself, or what I know?
Is what I am now what I am or do?
Or say or know? or what I was or knew?
Is my word for Word a noun or verb?
God knows, I know the heal-all is an herb
And herb of grace another name for rue.
The heartsease blooms to prove that thoughts come true.

What is spring? the treble peeper
In the swamp or Succor Brook;
Wake-robin waking all the leaves,
Lords-and-ladies, lady's slipper,
Ladies' tresses, lady's smock—
All the plants put on green sleeves:

Every spring, seed catalogues
Project their green content;
Man and wife, from gardeners
We trace our long descent.

Gardens take their titles from
What we most believe:
In Sweden, a spring orchid's named
For Adam and for Eve.

Though caterpillars pitch their tents
In our apple trees
And neighbors' children trample flat
The scarce fritillaries,

Still we persist in making plots
Where all our roses prick us—

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John Locke, a man with no green thumb,
Arranged a *hortus siccus.*

Underneath the leaves of life
We plant our narrow bed.
In the still terrarium
I found my lizard dead.

At Jamestown, settlers planted men
Perforce inside the fort;
All garden-views look out upon
Another *nature morte.*

Behind the headstones boys and girls
Consort and disagree.
O every truant man and maid
Hither comes home free!

Wars in books were waged for spice,
For tea, for cochineal;
Uccello's careful measurements
Make every bone yard real.

Across our borders and at home
The bonfires hiss and snap.
By Guy Fawkes' Night most gardens show
A black burnt-over map.

(O gardens take their titles from
The things we must believe:
Adam in the passion-play
Learnt his lines from Eve.)

The fires fell on Tivoli
Where gardens fall in more
Onomatopoeias than
Poets find words for.

We construct and reconstruct
Mazes to confuse us,
But each man meets his unicorn
In his *hortus conclusus.*

Selected ruins, temples, follies,
Old statues free of scar
Do not affect the crop we raise:
We harvest what we are.

Among the lords-and-ladies lying
In the apple's shade,
Escapes from Eden's garden, love,
We sleep in the bed we made.

My land alive is sick and dies away
Until the trumpets sound this day in May:
The resurrected world turns light from dark
And every fledgling leaf in the whole park
Becomes a bird. Here on this quickening shelf
I come among the warblers to myself;
With my own eyes I see the things I see—
My childhood's nature, the nature still of me.
What is the legend of this livelong play?
End over end, like kites, days blow away,
But now and then, today's a dancing day
When lovers dance the blessed world entire,
All subjects are all objects of desire.
The world is round! Your sea breaks on this coast;
The current flows back warm. We season most
Apart, in most unseasonable weather.
We saw the chestnut chandeliers together,
Saw their petals fall in persian patterns
Where shrieking peacocks posed in damask satins.
Who can believe, where boxwood smell is crossed
With bay, that paradise was ever lost?
Today the warblers flicker through the air:
Atlantis is a state of mind we share.
In Eden children's games were all begun,
The asphodel and daffodil were one.
Now everywhere the ocean is the same—
Succor Brook is just its local name.
O my America! my new-found-land!
I am come home again, and understand
How far away all children go to come
Upon the place that prodigals call home.

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Natsume Sōseki
A Japanese Meiji Intellectual

JUN ETŌ

TO THE JAPANESE, the literature of the Meiji period (1868-1912) has a certain distinctive quality which sharply distinguishes it from that of the Taishō (1912-1926) and Shōwa (1926-) eras. This quality is not easy to define, but I think it is related to the fact that Meiji writers possessed a strong sense of cultural identity as *Japanese* writers—despite, or rather because of, their having been the first Japanese intellectuals to be thoroughly exposed to the influence of the West in every aspect of their life and thought.

No matter how radically they differed from one another in their literary or political opinions, Meiji writers shared in the dominant national mission of their time: the creation of a new civilization that would bring together the best features of East and West, while remaining Japanese at its core. However they rejected the official values of Meiji society, they never lost their awareness of their responsibilities as writers in the service of their nation. This combined sense of national mission, social responsibility and cultural identity seems to have died with the two great Meiji writers, Natsume Sōseki and Mori Ōgai. It has not reappeared among the more gifted writers of the Taishō period, or even among the nationalistic writers of the late 1930's and early 1940's, let alone among my sex-obsessed contemporaries.

Meiji writers were much concerned with modern man's focus upon his own ego; but they nonetheless held fast to an ethic of self-restraint, to the conviction that individual efforts should be

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subordinated to transcendental values. By contrast, both Taishō and Shōwa writers have expressed the doctrine of the unrestrained assertion and expansion of the individual ego. For Taishō writers this assertion of self took the form of a kind of optimistic, easy-going individualism. Marxist writers of the late 1920's and early 1930's expressed it through an aggressive group egoism. Finally, post-World War II writers have reduced this self-assertion to the still narrower theme of unrestrained sexuality. Indeed, contemporary writers' ludicrous seriousness in dealing with sexual themes illustrates more clearly than anything else the thoroughness with which the ethic of stoic self-restraint has been eliminated from the consciousness of Japanese intellectuals during the half century since the end of the Meiji era.

I should like to explore the way in which this ethic of self-restraint was brought to moving literary perfection by an author who was, ironically enough, exquisitely sensitive to the enormous demands of his gigantic ego. The author is, of course, Natsume Sōseki, and the work in question is the novel, *Kokoro* (The Heart of Things). Sōseki was not only one of the greatest figures in modern Japanese literature but also undoubtedly one of the best exemplars of the inner struggles of the Meiji intellectual. His *Kokoro* was written in 1914, at the time of Sōseki's full maturity, and expressed so vividly Sōseki's long-standing sense of man's isolation in the egoistic modern world that one is almost tempted to turn away from its ruthless revelation of truth. *Kokoro* at the same time reflects the profound effect upon one of the best minds of Meiji Japan of two highly significant historical incidents—the death of the Emperor Meiji, and the subsequent self-immolation of General Nogi, one of Japan's great military heroes. Another good reason for selecting *Kokoro* for detailed examination is its availability in English in an excellent translation by Edwin McClellan.

Natsume Sōseki (1866-1916) was an unusually versatile and learned man. He was a gifted *haiku* poet, as well as one of the finest creators of Chinese poetry that Japan had produced in many centuries. He was a gifted calligrapher and traditional painter. He was a formidable scholar of English literature, concentrating upon such eighteenth-century writers as Swift, Fielding and

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Sterne, and for a period of time served as lecturer on English literature at Tokyo University. Sōseki can indeed be said to have been the ideal humanistic Meiji intellectual, of whom it was required to be knowledgeable in three fields of learning—Japanese, Chinese and Western (or *wa, kan* and *yo*)—if he was to be considered knowledgeable at all. But he was, above all, a novelist, and it is as a great novelist that he has cast his spell on the Japanese reading public. Nor has his popularity wavered since his death in 1916; his thirteen novels (along with a number of essays and short stories) constantly find new readers today.

Sōseki was the fifth son in a once well-to-do Tokyo family. (Sōseki's given name was Natsume Kin'nosuke, Sōseki being his pen name.) The unhappiness of his childhood was caused partly by the sharp decline in his family's status after the Meiji Restoration, but mostly by the complicated human relations frequently found in this kind of Japanese family. In accordance with a widespread Japanese custom, Sōseki, as the last child of his aging parents, was adopted at the age of two by a minor local official and his wife. But at the age of eight he was returned to his original family, along with his foster mother, because misconduct on the part of his foster father had led to divorce. Moreover, this same foster father caused Sōseki much difficulty in later life with his demands for money, claiming that Sōseki was still responsible for taking care of him, as a filial Japanese son, since there had been an error in the formalities of Sōseki's return to his original family. The story of Sōseki's unhappy reunion with his foster father is given expression in his novel, *Michikusa* (Loitering on the Way), which followed *Kokoro*. Certainly the pain and confusion in identity from these childhood experiences were to remain with Sōseki throughout his life.

He nonetheless made his way to Tokyo University, where he excelled in his English studies, and upon graduating taught English in provincial secondary schools until he was sent to England for study by the Ministry of Education. During his two-and-one-half-year stay in London, he began to experience what was to become one of the basic psychological motifs of his life, the problem of identity in a Japanese intellectual studying English literature

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during the great historical dislocation of his country's radical Westernization. He was later to recall this experience as follows:

> Since my early childhood I have enjoyed studying Chinese classics, and through these formulated a vague definition of what literature was. I assumed that English literature would be much the same thing as Chinese literature. If this turned out to be true, then it would be worth devoting my whole life to the study of English literature—and for this simple and childish reason I decided to enter the unfashionable English Department of Tokyo University. I studied rather hard, but by the time of my graduation I was obsessed by a sense of dissatisfaction, by the feeling that in my study of English literature I had been deceived. . . . I went to London with the same uneasy feeling which I could not overcome no matter how hard I studied. . . . My knowledge of English is far from profound, but I can at least say that it is by no means inferior to my knowledge of literary Chinese. With this equal proficiency in both languages, why do I feel such a strong attachment to the one and such a strong dislike to the other? I can only suppose that the two languages are fundamentally different in nature . . . and that the concept of literature in China and the concept of literature in England are irreconcilably contradictory. I came to this conclusion under a gaslight in the distant city of London many years after I graduated from the University. I may well be a childish fellow . . . but no matter how immature I may be, the fact remains that I cannot find the same kind of comfort and exaltation in English literature that I find in Chinese classics.

Had Sōseki been the kind of scholar who, like many of his contemporaries, had been content merely to introduce recent achievements of English scholarship into Japan, he would not have been confronted with this kind of frustration and disillusionment. But he aimed much higher: he wished to compete with, even surpass, the foremost scholars of English literature in the English-speaking world. This is of course an impossibility, or at least it *was* impossible for a Japanese born in the latter half of the nineteenth century. To understand this extraordinary ambition we must take more of Sōseki's family background into account.

Both Sōseki's original and foster families had been local administrators under the Tokugawa shogunate enjoying a social status equal to that of samurai. A boy growing up in two administrative families inevitably received thorough training in Chinese classics

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embodying Confucian ethics, and in historical studies dealing with problems of government. Sōseki's original concept of literature, like that of many raised under similar circumstances, stressed its public, rather than private, function. The study of English literature became, for him, as much a form of service to his nation as work in government would have been. And a scholar, no less than a government official, would have to compete with Western scholars on an equal basis in order to produce work worthy of the new civilization to be built. Such must have been Sōseki's inner logic. But his illusions were mercilessly destroyed while studying in London. (I treat this problem extensively in my *Natsume Sōseki**.) During this serious personal crisis, something else also appears to have been destroyed—his tie with the implicit value system of Meiji Japan.

For during his two-and-one-half-year stay in England, Sōseki experienced personal despair and profound disillusionment with his national ideal; in the process, Sōseki the scholar gradually disappeared, and Sōseki the writer emerged. Sōseki experienced a painful emergence from his previously all-enveloping Confucianism, and a liberation of his existential self. It was a form of rebirth or awakening which left him with a sense of self that was in the midst of crisis, totally unrelated, undefined and undefended. For it became depressively clear to him that his own background of Oriental culture left him irrevocably separated from the organic whole of Western civilization. He was thrown back, and indeed bitterly, upon his own cultural identity. And on that ground he found himself grappling with a monster called ego, which he sought to tame by committing himself to creative writing. He evolved an individualistic ethical principle which he called *"Jiko Hon'i,"* or egocentric individualism; yet with it all, he remained a Meiji intellectual with a sense of mission and social responsibility. Thus, in 1906, just after concluding his first novel, *Wagahai wa Neko de Aru* (I Am a Cat), he wrote to one of his disciples:

> If you are determined enough to devote your life to literature, you cannot be satisfied with a simple aesthetic product. It is true that I, too, am sometimes attracted by aesthetic things with *haiku* flavor, but at the

* Revised edition, Keisō Shobō, 1965.

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same time I feel a strong impulse to engage in novel-writing with the same fervent spirit as *the men of high purpose* of the period of the [Meiji] Restoration who willingly staked their lives for the realization of their cause.

The social commitment is there, but he identifies himself, not with the scholar-administrator representing existing authority, but with the revolutionary "man of high purpose" of the Restoration movement.

Like most Japanese scholars who went to England at that time to study, Sōseki originally intended to do his work at either Oxford or Cambridge. But he found the genteel atmosphere of these institutions disappointing, and chose instead University College of London. Even there he found himself unable to sit through what he considered to be mechanical lectures by uninspiring professors. He finally decided upon private lessons from an authority on Shakespeare, Dr. William James Craig, which he continued for about a year. All the while his financial situation was precarious—his grant from the Japanese government barely supported him—and he experienced great personal loneliness, receiving very infrequent mail from his pregnant wife. Nor could he find comfort in London, where he described himself as "lonely as a stray dog midst a pack of wolves."

In a desperate effort to solve both his personal dilemma and his basic intellectual concern with the nature of literature, Sōseki shut himself up in his room to write a book on the psychological and social basis of literature. It dealt mainly with the search for a common denominator between Oriental and Occidental literature, but his state of mind was such that he approached the point of nervous collapse without being able to finish the study (although he did make use of portions of it in his later lectures at Tokyo University, which in turn were eventually compiled in his complete works as *Bungaku Ron* [A Study in Literature]). He returned to Japan in January, 1903, in a state of exhaustion and despair.

He was nonetheless offered a lectureship in English literature at Tokyo Imperial University, the same position previously held by Lafcadio Hearn. And while serving in this capacity during the

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next few years he was able to reconstruct his shattered identity and at the same time produce several short stories and two of his most popular novels. The short stories have markedly romantic overtones, but at the same time expressed the author's fear of his own irrational, amorphous, but somehow powerful ego. The two novels—*I Am a Cat* and *Botchan*—won him widespread literary fame, and he readily abandoned the academic life in 1907 when offered the position of head of the literary department of *Asahi,* one of Japan's leading newspapers. From then until his death in 1916, Sōseki had his novels serialized exclusively in *Asahi*—with *Kokoro* the third from the last of these, written two years after the end of the Meiji era and two years before the end of his own life.

To examine the problems of egoism and human isolation that Sōseki treats in *Kokoro,* it is necessary to look more closely at his own anguished experiences in London. With the death of the traditional scholar-administrator within him, there was born a lonely, modern man. Yet why did he consider this emergence of the modern ego, despite his own principle of "egocentric individualism," to be bad and ugly? I believe it was mainly because of the survival within him, despite everything, of a private, Confucian value system. According to Confucian ethics in general, and Chu Hsi ethics in particular, the worth of a man's existence is determined solely in terms of his connection with the transcendental *t'ien* (usually translated as heaven). If he is severed from this transcendental source of value, he becomes worthless—virtually nothing. Trained in this strict Chu Hsi tradition, Sōseki could not tolerate the existence of his own exposed ego, entirely separate from any transcendental values. The still more disturbing impression that nothing but individual ego existed in this world caused him further fear and revulsion—resulting in a vehement form of self-condemnation.

Was there any escape from this deadlock? Sōseki sought to solve the problem by raising questions about the kind of human relationships possible for isolated modern man. He told himself that if a modern man were really capable of love, he might then overcome the agony of his loneliness. But the more Sōseki himself

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craved love, the less he felt love to be possible for him in his existing surroundings. This must be, he thought, because of the fatal human disease of egoism.

Once severed from transcendental values, man becomes the center of the world and, in Sōseki's judgment, can no longer love anyone but himself. Had Sōseki been a Spencerian social evolutionist, following the fashion of the time, he might well have been satisfied with the idea of man at the center of the world. Had he taken the path of pure aesthetics, he would have paid no attention to the impossibility of love. But instead he combined a realistic outlook that could not avoid these unpalatable truths, with a dedication to traditional ethics that could not permit him to accept them. In an effort to resolve this ambivalence, Sōseki felt himself forced to conclude that man's very existence in this world is sinful and dirty, and that there are just two alternatives available to overcome these loathsome qualities: the first, for man to assert himself boldly to the extent of eventually falling into a state of madness, the theme of his novel *Kōjin;* the second, man's violent annihilation of his own existence through suicide, the theme of *Kokoro.* If incapable of either of these ultimate solutions, man has no choice but to endure his ugliness and isolation until the moment of his natural annihilation, never forgetting his own sinfulness. Sōseki's attitude toward the human situation is, to put it mildly, a gloomy one—and in this attitude we find the dark shadow that underlies Japan's seemingly rapid and successful modernization.

In *Kokoro,* Sōseki evoked in a masterly manner his theme of man's isolation and incapability of love. Sōseki's approach in this novel is distinctly ethical, his manner of telling the story simple and clear. The novel is written in a style characterized by dignity and restrained beauty, and its effect is profound. I read this novel for the first time when I was twelve years old, and have since reread it at least ten times. Yet with each reading I am amazed to find myself profoundly absorbed, as if discovering for the first time the book's full power and its moving evocation of human suffering.

Structurally, *Kokoro* is divided into three parts: "Sensei and I," "My Parents and I" and "Sensei and His Testament." In

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the first two parts, which make up about half of the novel, Sensei (literally, "teacher," but also "master" or "mentor," and perhaps best translated by the French "*maître*") is described entirely through the eyes of the first-person narrator, a student about to graduate from a university. In these first two portions, Sensei does not impress us as a tragic figure. He in fact appears to be happily married, well educated, highly civilized in every way, and, what is more, a man of means. His only peculiarities, as observed by the student-narrator, are his having no profession and indeed doing nothing, and his rather disturbing custom of visiting the Zoshigaya cemetery alone once every month. Only gradually does the reader gain the impression that something is wrong with this man, and the suspense grows as he is transported into a strange, sad, transparent atmosphere removed from the surface of ordinary life. He is carried, so to speak, about halfway to *the heart of things*. In the final portion, "Sensei and His Testament," which consists of Sensei's long confession prepared just before his suicide and written in the form of a testament to the student-narrator, the reader finally comes to discover Sensei's true identity and the personal tragedy that led to his suicide. The novel's irony lies in the manner in which this apparently well-placed man becomes a miserable victim of a fatal human situation—of egoism, isolation and the inability to love.

The first-person student-narrator—the "I" of the novel—is not just a technical device but something much deeper—perhaps a representation of Sensei's younger and more immature self, or at least of a younger person possessing a spiritual affinity with Sensei. As a student about to graduate from a university, he is also about to be initiated into the dreadful truth of human life. At the beginning of the novel the reader finds him in this state on the beach at Kamakura where he first encounters Sensei. Basking in the sun and in the gaiety of youth, he has, as yet, no realization that he himself will become alienated from other people and from the beauty of nature itself, that he, too, will be unable to escape from the ugliness of human existence.* A passage from the opening

* Edwin McClellan throws light on this point in his article, "The Implication of Sōseki's *Kokoro*," *Monumenta Nipponica*, XIV, Nos. 3-4, (October 1958-January, 1959), 117.

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chapter, as translated by McClellan, reveals the extent to which he feels himself in harmony with everything around him.

> The next day, I followed Sensei into the sea, and swam after him. When we had gone more than a couple of hundred yards out, Sensei turned and spoke to me. The sea stretched, wide and blue, all around us, and there seemed to be no one near us. The bright sun shone on the water and the mountains, as far as the eye could see. My whole body seemed to be filled with a sense of freedom and joy, and I splashed about wildly in the sea. Sensei had stopped moving and was floating quietly on his back. I then imitated him. The dazzling blue of the sky beat against my face, and I felt as though little bright darts were being thrown into my eyes. And I cried out, "What fun this is!"

But this "sense of freedom and joy" soon disappears as the student becomes increasingly involved with Sensei. He never wonders why he is so impelled to this reserved gentleman who, for an unspecified reason, so carefully withdraws from the public and social activities proper for a man of his station. But Sensei is fully aware of the reason for the young man's interest in him. It is because the student is, so to speak, his own shadow, a man about to take the path he has already followed with so heavy a heart. Except for Sensei and his calm, attractive wife, there is no mention in the first part of the novel of the student's friends or acquaintances. When the boy returns to his provincial home after graduation, he feels alienated from his conventional parents and from the framework of traditional rural society within which they live; he is already, without realizing it, isolated from other people.

But when confronted with his father's fatal illness, the student unexpectedly experiences strong compassion toward his dying parent—possibly because of the special isolation and loneliness every human being feels in the face of death. In other words, only on his deathbed can the father achieve spiritual intimacy with his "well-educated" son, himself now in the process of experiencing the spiritual half-death of modern man.

Sensei had been made aware of his alienation when, an orphan growing up in a well-to-do family, he was deceived by his own uncle, who had designs upon his inheritance. The realization occurred while he was still at the university, and after severing ties

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with this uncle, he returned to Tokyo, having sold his properties, determined never to return to his home area again. At this point, however suspicious about the motives of any human relationship, he still has confidence in his own capacity for love and compassion. He thus attempts to help his poverty-stricken friend, K, to continue his studies by permitting him to share his comfortable boardinghouse rooms; and he seeks to make K, an exceedingly serious young man, more "human" through contact with Ojosan, the daughter of the boardinghouse owner, whom Sensei himself has long secretly loved. Sensei admires K's brilliance and religious dedication in search of the "true path," but considers him incapable of tender sentiment. Therefore, when K confides in Sensei that he, too, loves Ojosan, Sensei finds his confidence in his own capacity for love and compassion suddenly faltering. If he is to remain true to K, he must give up his love for Ojosan; if, on the other hand, he is to remain true to his own tender feelings for Ojosan, he must betray his only friend, K. Sensei had previously been a victim of his uncle's egoism; now it is his turn to be an agent of egoism. He decides to play a subtle psychological trick on K by accusing him of inconsistency in his religious stoicism.

I said cruelly, "Anyone who has no spiritual aspirations is an idiot." This was what K had said to me when we were traveling in Boshu. I threw back at him the very words that he had once used to humiliate me. Even my tone of voice was the same as his had been when he made the remark. But I insist that I was not being vindictive. I confess to you that what I was trying to do was far more cruel than mere revenge. I wanted to destroy whatever hope there might have been in his love for Ojosan.

. . . I said again: "Anyone who has no spiritual aspirations is an idiot." I watched K closely. I wanted to see how my words were affecting him. "An idiot . . . ," he said at last. "Yes, I am an idiot."

He stood still as he spoke, and stared at his feet. I was suddenly frightened that in desperation, K had decided to accept the fact that he was an idiot. I was as demoralized as a man who finds that his opponent, whom he has just knocked down, is about to spring up with a new weapon in his hand. A moment later, however, I realized that K had indeed spoken in a hopeless tone of voice. I wanted to see his eyes, but he would not look my way. Slowly we began to walk again.

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Informed a week later of Sensei's engagement to Ojosan, K quietly commits suicide, leaving behind no reference to his love for Ojosan. Now Sensei must face the full ugliness of his ego, without apology, despite his success in gaining the hand of the attractive Ojosan. Seeming to be the winner, Sensei is, in reality, a miserable loser, obsessed by a strong sense of guilt and human isolation. But gradually, over a period of time, Sensei becomes aware of the possibility that K himself might have suffered from the same sense of loneliness he now experiences:

> Time and again, I wondered what had caused K to commit suicide. At first I was inclined to think that it was disappointment in love. I could think of nothing but love then, and quite naturally I accepted without question the first simple and straightforward explanation that came to my mind. Later, however, when I could think more objectively, I began to wonder whether my explanation had not been simple. I asked myself "was it perhaps because his ideals clashed with reality that he killed himself?" But I could not convince myself that K had chosen death for such a reason. Finally, I became aware of the possibility that K had experienced loneliness as terrible as mine, and, wishing to escape quickly from it, had killed himself. Once more, fear gripped my heart. From then on, like a gust of winter wind, the premonition that I was treading the same path as K had done would rush at me from time to time and chill me to the bone.

This gust of winter wind not only chills Sensei's lonely heart, but his married life as well. For he refuses to share his agony with his wife, whom he has loved, and who loves him, in the ordinary sense of that word. The Western reader may find this behavior odd, but I believe we can say that, rather than reflecting cruelty, it stems from Sensei's realization that his wife would find it unbearable to face the dreadful truth of human isolation. His assumption is that peace of mind protected by ignorance is preferable to the agony of confrontation with cruel truth. If her husband's suicide were the result of a simple nervous breakdown, she might, as a girl raised with the stoical standards of her army-officer father, be able to endure it. But how could she endure being informed of all that had happened between her husband and K? In short, partly from pity, partly from fear, and most of all from his inability to believe in the possibility of overcoming his fatal isolation, even

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with his wife, Sensei avoids disclosing to her the cause of his loneliness. All this is revealed in a meaningful passage from the last part of *Kokoro:*

My mother-in-law died. There remained only my wife and myself. My wife said to me: "In all the world, I now have only you to turn to." I looked at her, and my eyes were suddenly filled with tears. How could I, who had no trust in myself, give her the comfort she needed? I thought her a very unfortunate woman.

And again:

My wife once asked me: "Can't a man's heart and a woman's heart ever become a part of each other so that they are one?" I gave a noncommittal answer: "Perhaps when the man and the woman are young." She sat quietly for a while. She was probably thinking of the time when she herself had been a young girl. Then she gave a little sigh.

It is not, however, until the Emperor Meiji's death, and the subsequent self-immolation of General Nogi, that Sensei finally makes up his mind to kill himself. The development of Sensei's decision is described as follows:

Then at the height of the summer, Emperor Meiji passed away. I felt as though the spirit of the Meiji era had begun with the Emperor, and had ended with him. I was overcome with the feeling that I and the others, who had been brought up in that era, were now left behind to live as anachronisms. . . . A month passed. On the night of the Imperial Funeral I sat in my study, and listened to the booming of the cannon. To me, it sounded like the last lament for the passing of an age. Later, I realized that it might also have been a salute to General Nogi. Holding the extra edition in my hand, I blurted out to my wife, "Junshi! Junshi!" (he killed himself! he killed himself!). . . . It was two or three days later that I decided to commit suicide.

It is of course clear that Sensei seeks death because it provides him with the only solution to the agony of egoism. But it is also clear that he dies, as he himself explains, "through loyalty to the spirit of the Meiji era"; he commits suicide because he wishes, like General Nogi, to follow the Emperor to the grave. What this dual motivation reveals is that Sensei, like Sōseki himself a Meiji intellectual, needed, even in suicide, a motive higher than a purely personal one. He had to connect his death to the passing of the great Meiji era so that his act would not be merely an escape

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from the human condition but would relate itself to ethical issues beyond the self. To understand these ethical issues, we must examine the enormous impact on the Japanese made by these two successive incidents—first the demise of Emperor Meiji, and then the *junshi* (self-immolation) of General Nogi and his wife.

Emperor Meiji died on July 30, 1912. To illustrate the way in which news of his death was received in the West, I should like to cite two comments from the *Times* of London. The first is a character sketch, not devoid of a bit of irony, of the Emperor himself:

> His Majesty was a generous patron of art, and if he can be said to have had any passion it was for poetry. Thousands of the impressionist verselets which represent this branch of Japanese literature were composed by him, and well helped to keep green the memory of a ruler whose name must hold high place amongst the best Sovereigns the world has known. In his private life he was essentially a man of sorrow, for out of 13 children born to him only four survive; but on the other hand, he had the supreme satisfaction of seeing his country rise from the rank of a petty and despised Oriental State to the peer of the Great Powers of the Occident.

The second concerns the Japanese response to his death:

> A dense mass of humanity again thronged the great open spaces outside the Palace walls last night, continually moving up to the Emperor's gate, there to kneel in prayer a few minutes and then pass on once more. The crowd was drawn from all classes, and all preserved the highest degree of orderliness and silence, save for the crunching of the gravel under wooden sandals and the low continuous murmur of prayers. It is said that even Christians were to be found among the kneeling crowd. One who looked over the sea of bowed heads outside the Palace wall could not desire better proof of the vitality of that worship of the Ruler. . .

Even allowing for the fact that the Anglo-Japanese Alliance had just been renewed for the second time in 1911, these comments in the *Times* are impressively favorable, and reveal how highly the Emperor was regarded both at home and abroad.

General (also Count) Nogi and Countess Nogi performed their self-immolation on September 13, 1912, the day of the Emperor's funeral, and the *Times* had this to say about their actions:

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General Count Nogi and his wife are said to have committed suicide with short sword at the moment when the gun was fired which announced the start of the funeral procession of the Emperor. The news that Count Nogi and his wife have committed suicide on the day of Emperor Mutsuhito's funeral is a striking reminder of the persistence in Japan of the spirit to which our ally owes her greatness. To this latest manifestation of its profound but stern appeal, the Western world, even if it cannot fully comprehend, must bow in respectful silence. Men like the late Count Nogi were the mainspring of the era of Meiji, or enlightenment, which may be passing in fact as well as in name with the death of the great ruler whom he served.

General Nogi explained in his testament his reason for committing suicide. He did so, he stated, because thirty-five years before, during the Satsuma Rebellion of 1877, while Commander of the Fourteenth Regiment, then stationed in Kokura in Northern Kyushu, he had lost his regimental banner to the enemy. Until the end of World War II the regimental banner was regarded as the incarnation of the Emperor, and was handed by the Emperor in person to each commander at the time a new regiment was formed. Losing the banner to the enemy, therefore, resulted in extreme shame, which could be redeemed only through death. Nogi had then duly asked his superiors to grant him this death. The Chief of Staff, General Yamagata Aritomō, had been inclined to approve the request, but later changed his mind when persuaded by a military colleague that it would be better for Nogi to survive and serve well. Nogi had, since then, been waiting for the proper time for his suicide.

The opportunity seemed to come to him at long last following his victorious return from the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-1905. Nogi had served in that war as Commander of the Third Army, which had engaged in the seige of Port Arthur, one of the bloodiest campaigns in the history of the Imperial Japanese Army. During this 159-day campaign, Nogi lost 59,000 of the 130,000 men he commanded, including his two sons. Upon returning to Tokyo on January 14, 1906, he was given an audience with the Emperor Meiji at the Imperial Palace, and concluded his report with a petition that he be granted death to make up for the loss of such a large number of His Majesty's loyal subjects. One of his biograph-

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ers records that, upon uttering this request, Nogi's eyes filled with tears as he prostrated himself before the Emperor. The Emperor remained silent for a while, and then said: "Now is not the time for you to die. If you so earnestly wish your death, it shall be only after my own death." Immediately following this audience, the Emperor issued a special edict, praising Nogi's skillful military actions and the loyalty of his men. Nogi finally found the moment for his suicide at the funeral of the Emperor.

Iconoclastic historians, Japanese as well as Western, have recently sought more prosaic interpretations of this heroic incident. These historians prefer to assume that Nogi had simply been manipulated by cunning court politicians, especially by General Yamagata, who wished Nogi to die at this dramatic moment in order to buttress the Japanese morale which had so deteriorated during the years following the Russo-Japanese War. Certainly it can be said that Nogi, like many traditional military men, had been obsessed throughout his life with the idea of heroic death, and that he wished to bring historical glory to his name even at the expense of his life. But I, for one, cannot agree with these iconoclastic historians. For if one is content with this kind of rationalistic interpretation, one is unable to grasp the deep sense of tragedy felt by the Japanese at the moment of General Nogi's death.

Sōseki was by no means the only writer to respond to this manifestation of samurai-like heroism. The first response came from Mori Ōgai who, as a high official in the War Ministry, happened to be on close terms with Prince Yamagata. On September 18, just five days after Nogi's death, and in fact on the day of his funeral, Ōgai completed and submitted to the editor of *Chuo Koron* his first historical short story, *The Testament of Okitsu Yagoyemon;* it was the story of a samurai of the Tokugawa period who committed *junshi* for a reason quite similar to Nogi's. This story marked a turning point in the career of Mori Ōgai as a writer and thinker. For some years prior to the death of Emperor Meiji, Ōgai's attitude toward contemporary Japanese society had been both skeptical and indecisive. He had been repelled by the emergence of so-called naturalist writers; but he had also been critically concerned with the growing power among younger intel-

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lectuals of revolutionary ideologies such as anarchism, socialism and marxism. He would sometimes seem to be liberal, sometimes authoritarian. But upon being profoundly moved by the death of General and Countess Nogi, his conflicts resolved into determined support for traditional ethics. After *The Testament of Okitsu Yagoyemon,* Ōgai produced nothing but historical works—whether novels, research investigations, biographies or dramas—with the one exception of his excellent translation of Goethe's *Faust.*

For Natsume Sōseki, too, the death of General Nogi stimulated a sudden desire for the restoration of his lost identity as the ambitious scholar-administrator who had wanted to do something for the sake of his country. Just as General Nogi had lost his military banner to the enemy during the Satsuma Rebellion, Sōseki had lost his spiritual banner in his lonely campaign in London. From then on, he had been able to live only as an isolated modern man suffering from the agony of egoism and incapacity for love. But the Emperor Meiji's death and General Nogi's *junshi* made him realize that the spirit of Meiji had not entirely died within him. Now the shadow of the entire value structure of this great era emerged from his tortured past, smiling at him like the ghost of a loved one. Perhaps the ghost whispered to him: "Come to me." And Sōseki responded, indicating through his novel's protagonist that a part of himself had died with the passing of the Meiji era. Thus Sōseki wrote *Kokoro* to make it clear that he was on the side of the ghost of the traditional, but somehow universal, ethics —the ethics of stoic self-restraint or antiegoism—even though fully aware that the whole value system of the Meiji era had crumbled long before the Emperor's death, and that a new age was emerging from this chaos—an age in which the unrestrained assertion of the ego would be considered not an act of ugliness but the privilege of younger generations. It should be noted that the rise of these egoistic generations has precisely corresponded with Japan's increasing isolation in the international community.

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on morality

comments on the Scholar symposium
in Summer, 1965

A House of Truth

ROBERT COLES

Research psychiatrist to the Harvard University Health Services and a consultant to the Southern Regional Council, Dr. Coles has for the past four years studied Southern children in newly desegregated schools and youth in the sit-in movement.

FIVE YEARS AGO when my wife and I first started our work in the South we moved widely over the region, and traveled lightly. The books we carried with us probably tell on our minds: Agee's *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men,* Bernanos' *Diary of a Country Priest,* Simone Weil's *The Need for Roots* and *Gravity and Grace,* Erikson's *Childhood and Society* and *Young Man Luther,* Cash's *The Mind of the South,* the collected poems of Eliot, Conrad's *Lord Jim* and *The Heart of Darkness,* the Bible and the Book of Common Prayer. Our furniture and all other books had been put in storage. Even these few seemed a heavy burden at the time—we were trying to pare ourselves down strictly to ourselves and what vision we could find. We felt rather self-conscious, anyway, choosing those books (I now feel self-conscious listing them and talking about it) but we did feel the need for their companionship, and we were right: we needed those books at times for the strength and purpose they gave us.

In this regard, I remember the first jail I visited—it was in Louisiana to talk with a veteran, at age twenty, of seventeen arrests and a number of beatings, all in the cause of civil rights. The young man had left college to pursue the life of nonviolent social protest, and had taken with him books by such writers as Gandhi, Ralph Ellison, Richard Wright and David Riesman. When I came to see him he was frightfully tired and irritable. A succession of jailers over the past months had done their very best to shake his nerve, weaken his determination. Now their success was apparent, and indeed had prompted his lawyer to secure my presence, so that the youth's mental condition could be estimated, and perhaps steadied. For a good while he had been kept isolated and deprived of decent food and bedding. He had been teased and taunted. He had been pushed about. His lawyer knew all this—he was a *local* Negro lawyer, and for him even to take such a case was the equivalent of participation in a sit-in—and quickly told me about it. The youth spoke not a word of complaint about such matters. He wanted to talk about his shaky, moody state of mind, and he wanted to tell me what he found most painful about solitary confinement: the hours of barren idleness, the

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long stretches of cornered inaction, when his mind was left unremittingly to itself and its own devices, with no companionship allowed—not conversation, books, or newspapers, not voices on radio or television, not even the possibility of reading a letter or writing one.

He told me that if he could read one of his books for an hour each day, he would manage much better: "I could pick a few sentences and memorize them each day, and they'd keep me going." His books, he recalled, were the first of his possessions to be seized, and the most celebrated aspect of his infamy: they were hailed by his captors and the local press as evidence of his radical, un-American sympathies.

My job as a psychiatrist was to let the prison doctor know what I felt to be the likely prognosis for this inmate of a month—no trial appeared in sight. It must be said in fairness that the police and the prosecutor were worried about their prisoner—he seemed disturbed enough to give them second thoughts about the advisability of letting the public discover the quality of care given its arrested citizens. A local doctor had recommended tranquilizers, but they seemed of little avail. I suggested that they be continued, but supplemented with an hour's reading time each day. I felt that the patient's—he had become that—spirits would improve if the authorities could be prevailed upon to let the prisoner and his books be joined for even a small portion of each day. The doctor obtained the reluctant consent of the jailers. The student was allowed to read for a half hour each day. He did, even memorizing a fair share of what he read. Later, a free man, he attributed his "survival" to those books: "I tell you, without them I never would have joined the movement, and I never would have been able to face a Southern style sheriff, and I never would have lasted the treatment they gave me in that jail." All of which is enough, at the very least, to make any writer a bit nervous.

Now the writers who sustained that youth should be less apprehensive than proud. Their own struggle for meaning and value, for some coherent sense of what moves and ails us, for what ought to guide and summon us, for words to make explicit both our present fate and our rightful destiny, became part of the moral courage of this young American, and also part of his psychological strength under extreme provocation and duress. If the youth felt sturdier and freshly fortified before his tormentors, those who wrote what he read must feel less lonely or merely self-fulfilling in their work.

What struck me about the SCHOLAR's Symposium on Morality was its very specific relevance to the problems facing such American youth. I have been watching and studying these young people for several years as they try to determine, within themselves and in the company of others, the worth of their convictions; that is, how sensible those convictions are in the abstract, but more than that, how usefully and steadfastly they help generate the will and the sense of purpose required when moral principles, no matter how persuasive they be, face the challenges set against them by men and institutions. Again and again the participants in the Symposium took up the matter of choice, of what makes for those haunting, critical decisions in life, the kind that writers like Conrad have pursued to the very limits of their ethical implications. The subject of standards also figured prominently in the discussion, the always debatable question of how fixed, "realistic" or "relative" they should be. The dangers of fanaticism came up, the temptation to commit "wrong" in the so-called interests of a good cause. (In my experience it is never that explicit; the "expedient" evil is often not even comprehended as such by those committed wholeheartedly or ideologically to the "cause" whose interests are at stake.) Finally, there seemed to be a tension—in all history there has been one—between those who more or less looked to man himself for answers to questions of what morality is, and how it may be consolidated in each of us, and in our society, and those who call upon some transcendental vision to measure and justify (if not explain) our lives.

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All of these particular issues—others were of course mentioned—have faced every sit-in student I have interviewed, every youth I have seen facing mobs in order to secure an education or, a while later, the right to vote. It is not easy in a time of shifting beliefs, uncertain allegiances, and contradictory ideologies, to discuss a subject like "morality" in a way that is consistently relevant to those who risk their very lives in the moral struggles of our nation. I have heard many students involved in the civil rights movement decry the academy as part and parcel of a world that has lost interest in justice and ethics, a world content that its members pursue whatever abstractions seem engaging at the moment with whatever seriousness or frivolity they happen to choose. I know they could not so indict this Symposium. Its discussion communicates a sense of caring, and also some capacity for doubt and ambiguity that at the same time resists a jaded disregard for all but the most scrupulously "factual" and "provable."

I once asked a thoroughly uneducated Negro sharecropper why he took the singular risks he did in the face of his state's segregationist "justice." In the course of that discussion the following remark was made by him: "I don't know why I do it; I even doesn't want to at times; but it's just as right to do even so, and I'm sure glad I end up with what's right, even if I can't always make it seem the smart thing afterwards." Some obligations are ineffable, if nonetheless powerfully compelling. I don't think his problem was entirely one of language or sophistication. Everywhere men shudder as they hesitate, then leap. That poor farmworker worried before and after his uncertain, apprehensive commitment became his deeds. To examine his "morality" would require so subtle a knowledge of the roots of his thought and action that I really think the deliberate vagueness of the word "spirit" or "character" to be more accurate: he had spirit in him, and he was a man of character. The details of his childhood, the facts of his social and economic existence, the cultural ambience he shares with his family and his friends (that characterizes his neighborhood and indeed the region of this country to which it belongs) all of those "factors" simply fail to ignite *that one man, his* morality, actively expressed, timidly justified, poorly explained.

I think that is one of the chief troubles we have these days; the sources of dignity and ethical responsibility in particular lives are not really known, despite all our interest in the mind. Bruno Bettelheim and Viktor Frankl did not just discover, but experienced, the awful disparity between what they believed to be a coherent *view* of man, his nature and his inner struggles, and what in fact could be relied upon to *give* coherence—hence dignity—to inmates of the concentration camps. The appearance and strength of morality can even defy the willful categories of those who today make it their business to evaluate human personality. By no means were the "mature" and "nonneurotic" the best able to resist bestiality and brutality. By no means did troubled and vexed minds, given to "unrealistic" fantasies or "sick," obsessional musings, fail to justify their humanity and dignity. It is a bold man indeed, in the face of what we have witnessed this century, who relies too confidently or devotedly on any particular bit of knowledge as a foundation for his ideas about man's mind, let alone his moral nature.

With the words "moral nature" I am back to the three issues raised in the Symposium of greatest interest to me, especially so since they have preoccupied the people I have known and studied these past years. They involve the nature of moral crises and their resolution, the nature of ideals, and the nature of man's place in the universe as it relates to his morality. Like everyone else, I can only add a few glimmers of observation and experience to such matters.

The individuals I have met who have faced these three issues have rather unanimously judged themselves to have faced one issue; moreover, there is also a unanimity to their descriptions of what they faced, how they came to do it, why they

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decided as they did, and what their experience means not only for them but for the rest of us. For example, here is a white college student telling why he went to Mississippi for a summer, endured several beatings and arrests there, and decided to stay on for a whole school year:

I had to have a chance to decide. . . . I mean there had *to be* the project, so that there was actually some choice to be made; otherwise I would have got a job at home, or maybe gone to Europe with my brother. . . . No, I don't think you realize what you really believe until you do something. Until then, it's all theory and discussion, like a philosophy course. I mean, I could have written down certain things I would have thought I believed, but that's lip service until it's put up to a test—not only in civil rights, but in everyday life; I mean, what you do with your neighbor, or the stranger on the street who needs you; or whether you really care about what we do abroad, or what's happening any place on the earth. . . . Ideals have to be great enough to spur you on, even though you know you can't ever really live up to all of them; but I'd hate *not* to have some of the ideals I've failed to meet, because we all depend upon them in tough times, and sometimes they make all the difference in the world. . . . By my beliefs I mean more than ideas you learn in school; I mean some kind of faith that it's worth the effort, I mean *we're* worth it. . . . It's not only individuals who count, but mankind. Life itself is at stake when one person suffers; and that's where Donne was so right. . . . I don't know about God, but you have to believe in some thing beyond yourself, or you end up taking yourself so seriously. Look at what's happened to revolutions and leaders when they think they have "the answer". . . . We try to encourage the children in the freedom schools to read *all* the books they can find, and not believe any one of them too much. Yesterday I told my class of ten-year-olds that books are like bricks, they all go to building a House of Truth. . . . You can't focus on any one brick because you lose sight of the House; but I suppose I should have added that the House is so big that you can only get to know a room or two and the bricks that make those walls; and faith has to do with realizing that there are things we don't know, important things, kind of like rooms in the House that we've never walked in.

Ranging over such taped conversations brings back the immediacy of the moral struggle in such youths, yet also the similarity between their concerns and those of the participants in the SCHOLAR's Symposium. (I have taken the opportunity to present such remarks because I believe them to be essentially all I have to say, the determining basis, that is, for anything I might add as comment upon the Symposium.) Repeatedly I have heard these youths emphasize that moral decisions do not simply follow from moral truths adopted and even held close to heart. Moral decisions are made in a moment that enables them, that "brings" them into being—whether they be the awful moments of the Nazi camps and the Soviet camps, those of the American White House in the midst of the responsibilities for waging and ending a terrible Asian war, or those of the American South coming to terms finally with its proud and dismal exile. I also have heard these youths stress how very much they require more than practical and immediate goals, how widely and deeply they have called upon sets of beliefs and articles of faith in moments that have really counted, for them and for all of us. Nor have they always been able to ignore the temptations to arrogance and fanaticism, to a kind of man-centered outlook that begets the humorless, devilish pride characteristic of what many of the social upheavals in this century have produced. A morality that is once set in motion, once attached to the inclinations in people that make for deeds, is not without its own tests or crises. Under such circumstances I have seen the ideas of moral philosophers accepted or rejected. One philosophy may be found useful and sensible, another one altogether irrelevant or inappropriate. Still, the observer wonders how "right" or "wrong" such decisions are, how suitable it is to invoke an excuse here, a change of vision there. In the field of battle, morality both lives powerfully and risks instant death before such enemies as practicality, power, brutality—and most assuredly before the greed and spoils that come with victory.

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The youth I saw in that Louisiana jail, who longed for those books and responded to their succor, remarked to me only recently, two years after his imprisonment: "What's right that got you going may not be what's right when you get there." I have worked long enough with rural farm families to recognize the origins of that kind of wisdom, "folk wisdom" we intellectuals call it, paying our categorical respect to the sharpness of such perceptions distilled from hard living. This youth, however, combines his past farm life with his college education. He shifts his devotion, too, going from one author to another, one morality to another, drawing near one notion, turning away another, not always aware that there is in him an overall morality that has given form to his deeds and aspirations, his role in social protest, his willingness and eagerness to read, to take up one book after another and give them all his attention and concern. "One thing I know," he added at the end of a series of remarks meant to say that he was actually confused about what he knew, "I was taught not to hurt and not to get hurt, and I believe what's right for me is right for everyone." That mixture of humanism and enlightened self-interest is anything but rare in American life. Whether it suffices in some of the complicated, critical situations that crop up so regularly in this century is another matter. I have, for example, seen him under enough strain both to get hurt and declare himself able indeed to hurt certain others. "To feel like Dr. King or Gandhi, you have to be religious," he explained to me before he went on to say: "I'm not, so I'm not sure I'm really nonviolent." Yet there were those he knew who were, and he couldn't quite explain their nonviolence on the basis of their religious beliefs:

> They truly are nonviolent; it's in their bones, or they get the message from King and really swing with it. . . . I don't think I really can know whether I am or not; so far I've been nonviolent, but you always wonder about the big test, when the chips are down. I guess it's only then you can find out; but what you find then may only be a judgment on that moment, and meanwhile every day we have to live and be judged for that, too.

There are, evidently, many ledgers and accounts at issue in the matter of how we behave, and what we conclude about one another's behavior.

I must add one personal footnote to remarks that I have basically intended to derive from the experiences of others. What makes for merciful people and for courageous people is for me very much a mystery, in spite of all we know (and claim to know) about the inside of man's body and mind and the outside of the world he inhabits. I have seen poor, illiterate people relinquish apathetic, aimless lives to achieve an order of bravery and dignity that could only inspire envy in me. I have seen others, equally crushed and hopeless, budge not one inch, lift not one finger to say goodbye to their misery or protest their squalor. I have seen brilliant, competent people live out decades of uncaring time, filled to the brim with intricately rationalized indifference and intelligently justified coldness or moral neutrality. I have seen other men of intellectual cultivation and refinement display the rarest kind of quiet but hard courage, so that every bit of wonder ever spoken about man's moral sensibilities has seemed justified by them. With such facts staring at us, telling us how various we are, and hard-to-know, what are we to conclude—as the Symposium was asked to —about a "viable" or "tenable" morality?

Today our Promethean hands are thoroughly probing this planet, and decisively reaching out from it. Increasingly we live at close quarters to one another; and there are more of us than ever before. Even so, neither our competence nor our numbers have pardoned us from terror, from blindness to one another's presence and meaning. Technologists of matter and of mind come and go, and still we struggle with hurt among friends, in families, and between colleagues; and still monstrous barbarities persist among peoples and between nations. I have no coherent set of principles

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that can explain such difficult circumstances, or help me always to do my rightful share to diminish their harsh nature. If asked, though, to summon what I lean on most heavily, and what I would hope—but dare not easily believe—might help me most at the more critical turns of my mind's ethical life, I would say, from Revelation 13:10, "He that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity." There are, of course, all sorts and conditions of captivity, and one of them has been described by Bernanos in the concluding moments of *Diary of a Country Priest:* "How easy it is to hate oneself. True grace is to forget. Yet if pride could die in us, the supreme grace would be to love oneself in all simplicity—as one would love any one of those who themselves have suffered and loved in Christ." Between learning the apocalyptic dangers facing us, and working for an order of self-respect that urges sharing of its faith and contentment with others, we have much to do on this earth.

The Insidious Ethic of Conscience

JOAN DIDION

Miss Didion is a novelist and critic. Her article on contemporary movies, "I Can't Get That Monster Out of My Mind," appeared in the Autumn, 1964, SCHOLAR.

AS IT HAPPENS I am in Death Valley, in a room at the Enterprise Motel and Trailer Park, and it is July, and it is hot. In fact it is 119°. I cannot seem to make the air conditioner work, but there is a small refrigerator, and I can wrap ice cubes in a towel and hold them against the small of my back. With the help of the ice cubes I have been trying to think in some abstract way about "morality," a word I distrust more every day, but my mind veers inflexibly toward the particular.

Here are some particulars. At midnight last night, on the road in from Las Vegas to Death Valley Junction, a car hit a shoulder and turned over. The driver, very young and apparently drunk, was killed instantly; his girl was found alive but bleeding internally, deep in shock. I talked this afternoon to the nurse who had driven the girl to the nearest doctor, 185 miles across the floor of the Valley and three ranges of lethal mountain road. The nurse explained that her husband, a talc miner, had stayed on the highway with the boy's body until the coroner could get over the mountains from Bishop, at dawn today. "You can't just leave a body on the highway," she said. "It's immoral."

It was one instance in which I did not distrust the word, because she meant something quite specific. She meant that if a body is left alone for even a few minutes on the desert, the coyotes close in and eat the flesh. Whether or not a corpse is torn apart by coyotes may seem only a sentimental consideration, but of course it is more: one of the promises we make to one another is that we will try to retrieve our casualities, try not to abandon our dead to the coyotes. If we have been taught to keep our promises—if, as Mr. Hallie suggested, our upbringing is good enough—we stay with the body, or have bad dreams.

I am talking, of course, about the kind of social code that is sometimes called, usu-

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ally pejoratively, "wagon-train morality." In fact that is precisely what it is. For better or worse, we are what we learned as children: my own childhood was illuminated by graphic litanies of the grief that awaited those who failed in their loyalties to each other. The Donner-Reed Party, starving in the Sierra snows, all the ephemera of civilization gone save that one vestigial taboo, the provision that no one should eat his own blood kin. The Jayhawkers, who quarreled and separated not far from where I am tonight. Some of them died in the Funerals and some of them died down near Badwater and most of the rest of them died in the Panamints. A woman who got through gave the Valley its name. Some might say that the Jayhawkers were killed by the desert summer, and the Donner Party by the mountain winter, by circumstances beyond control; we were taught that they had somewhere abdicated their responsibilities, somehow breached their primary loyalties, or they would not have found themselves helpless in the mountain winter and the desert summer, would not have given way to acrimony, would not have deserted one another, would not have *failed.* In brief we heard such stories as cautionary tales, and they still suggest the only kind of "morality" that seems to me to have any but the most potentially mendacious meaning.

You are quite possibly impatient with me by now; I am talking, you want to say, about a "morality" so primitive that it scarcely deserves the name, a code that has as its point only survival, not the attainment of the ideal good. Exactly. Particularly out here tonight, in this country so ominous and terrible that to live in it is to live with antimatter, it is difficult to believe that "the good" is a knowable quantity. Let me tell you what it is like out here tonight. Stories travel at night on the desert. Someone gets in his pickup and drives a couple of hundred miles for a beer, and he carries news of what is happening, back wherever he came from. Then he drives another hundred miles for another beer, and passes along stories from the last place and from the one before; it is a network kept alive by people whose instincts tell them that if they do not keep moving at night on the desert they will lose all reason. Here is a story that is going around the desert tonight: over across the Nevada line, sheriff's deputies are diving in some underground pools, trying to retrieve a couple of bodies known to be in the hole. The widow of one of the drowned boys is over there; she is eighteen, and pregnant, and is said not to leave the hole. The divers go down and come up, and she just stands there and stares into the water. They have been diving for ten days but have found no bottom to the caves, no bodies and no trace of them, only the black 90° water going down and down and down, and a single translucent fish, not classified. The story tonight is that one of the divers has been hauled up incoherent, out of his head, shouting—until they got him out of there so that the widow could not hear—about water that got hotter instead of cooler as he went down, about light flickering through the water, about fire, about magma, about underground nuclear testing.

That is the tone stories take out here, and there are quite a few of them tonight. And it is more than the stories alone. Across the road at the Faith Community Church a couple of dozen old people, come here to live in trailers and die in the sun, are holding a prayer sing. I cannot hear them and do not want to. What I can hear are occasional coyotes and a constant chorus of "Baby the Rain Must Fall" from the jukebox in the Snake Room next door, and if I were also to hear those dying voices, those midwestern voices drawn to this lunar country for some unimaginable atavistic rites, *rock of ages cleft for me,* I think I would lose my own reason. Every now and then I imagine I hear a rattlesnake, but my husband says that it is a faucet, a paper rustling, the wind. Then he stands by the window, and plays a flashlight over the dry wash outside.

What does it mean? It means nothing

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manageable. There is some sinister hysteria in the air out here tonight, some hint of the monstrous perversion to which any human idea can come. "I followed my conscience." "I did what I thought was right." How many madmen have said it and meant it? How many murderers? Klaus Fuchs said it, and the men who committed the Mountain Meadows Massacre said it, and Alfred Rosenberg said it. And, as we are rotely and rather presumptuously reminded by those who would say it now, Jesus said it. Maybe we have all said it, and maybe we have been wrong. Except on that most primitive level —our loyalties to those we love—what could be more arrogant than to claim the primacy of personal conscience? ("Tell me," as Mr. Bell's rabbi asked when he said that he did not believe in God, "do you think God cares?") At least some of the time, the world appears to me like a painting by Hieronymus Bosch; were I to follow my conscience then, it would lead me out onto the desert with Marion Faye, out to where he stood in *The Deer Park* looking east to Los Alamos and praying, as if for rain, that it would happen: *". . . let it come and clear the rot and the stench and the stink, let it come for all of everywhere, just so it comes and the world stands clear in the white dead dawn."*

Of course you will say that I do not have the right, even if I had the power, to inflict that unreasonable conscience upon you; nor do I want you to inflict your conscience, however reasonable, however enlightened, upon me. ("We must be aware of the dangers which lie in our most generous wishes," Lionel Trilling once wrote. "Some paradox of our nature leads us, when once we have made our fellow men the objects of our enlightened interest, to go on to make them the objects of our pity, then of our wisdom, ultimately of our coercion.") That the ethic of conscience is intrinsically insidious seems scarcely a revelatory point, but it was one raised with any persistence in the SCHOLAR Symposium only by Daniel Bell; the other colloquists exhibited a troubling readiness to *segue* from agreement with Mr. Bell into the quite contradictory position that the ethic of conscience is dangerous when it is "wrong," and admirable when it is "right."

You see I want to be quite obstinate about insisting that we have no way of knowing—beyond that fundamental loyalty to the social code—what is "right" and what is "wrong," what is "good" and what "evil." I dwell so upon this because the most disturbing aspect of "morality" seems to me to be the frequency with which the word now appears; in the press, on television, in the most desultory kinds of conversation. Questions of straightforward power (or survival) politics, questions of quite indifferent public policy, questions of almost anything: they are all assigned these factitious moral burdens. There is something facile going on, some self-indulgence at work. Of course we would all like to "believe" in something, like to assuage our private guilts in public causes, like to lose our tiresome selves; like, perhaps, to transform the white flag of defeat at home into the brave white banner of battle away from home. And of course it is all right to do that; that is how, immemorially, things have gotten done. But I think it is all right only so long as we do not delude ourselves about what we are doing, and why. It is all right only so long as we remember that all the *ad hoc* committees, all the picket lines, all the brave signatures in the New York *Times*, all the tools of agitprop straight across the spectrum, do not confer upon anyone any *ipso facto* virtue. It is all right only so long as we recognize that the end may or may not be expedient, may or may not be a good idea, but in any case has nothing to do with "morality." Because when we start deceiving ourselves into thinking not that we want something or need something, not that it is a pragmatic necessity for us to have it, but that it is *a moral imperative* that we have it, then is when we join the fashionable madmen, and then is when the thin whine of hysteria is heard in the land, and then is when we are in bad trouble. And I suspect we are already there.

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Morals and Ethics

KENNETH KENISTON

For several years now, Mr. Keniston has been engaged in a study of American youth and alienation from American society. His book, The Uncommitted, *will be published this fall by Harcourt, Brace and World. Mr. Keniston is an assistant professor of psychiatry in the Yale University Medical School.*

LIKE ALL GOOD symposiasts, the participants in the SCHOLAR Symposium on Morality have raised many more questions than they (or anyone) could possibly hope to solve. This leaves the commentator on their discussion with the agreeable option of selecting but one morsel from this groaning intellectual board. Accordingly, and in keeping with my vocational bias as a psychologist, I will pursue one of the themes introduced by Dr. Henry Murray—namely, the question of the evolution of morality. And by developing a distinction between morals and ethics that has been elsewhere proposed by Erik Erikson,* I hope to suggest why I think a qualitatively new dimension has been added to the problem of morality in our time.

To make my point, I must first distinguish between two types of morality that differ in form, in psychological function and in their place in social evolution. The discussants use the terms "morality," "morals" and "ethics" more or less interchangeably; but I propose here to use "morals" and "ethics" to define the opposite ends of a continuum of morality that runs from specific to general, and from reflexive to reflective and from primitive to civilized. By "morals" I will mean the socially learned, largely unconscious, relatively specific and apparently self-evident rules of right conduct in any community. When an individual violates his moral code, he feels guilt, the pangs of conscience experienced as a part of the "not-me," as an alien force that acts upon the conscious and experiencing self. Moral codes tend to be specific and situational: they tell us how to behave ourselves (or how not to behave ourselves) in defined kinds of situations. When a moral man acts morally, he often acts automatically and unreflectively: the power of his moral sense is shown by his imperviousness to temptation.

By "ethics," however, I want to refer to the individual's thought-out, reflective and generalized sense of good and evil, the desirable and the undesirable, as integrated into his sense of himself and his view of the world. When an ethical man violates his own ethic, he feels not guilt but a sense of human failure, a kind of existential shame that he has not been who he thought himself to be. A man's conscience is commonly experienced as alien; but his ethical sense is a part (often the heart) of his central and best self. Moral codes tend to be specific and situational; but ethical principles are general and universal, seeking to provide guidelines for conduct in all possible situations. While morals tell us how to behave, ethics tells us what to aspire to. Therefore the central conflict of moral life is the struggle between instinct and morals; but the central tension of ethical life is the question of how to achieve one's ethical aims.

All of this presupposes a difference in the psychological development of morals and

* See "The Golden Rule in the Light of New Insight" in *Insight and Responsibility* (New York: Norton, 1964). Many of the themes of my comments are drawn from Erikson's essay.

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ethics. Morals come first in life: anyone fortunate enough to have devoted parents who are minimally consistent in how they respond to him in childhood is likely to develop an ingrained sense of morals—a superego—rooted in his childish anticipations of his parents' response to his behavior. The parents' presence is internalized, and with it a set of "do's" and "don'ts" based on parental precept and (more important) parental response and example. The most potent of these prescriptions inevitably relate to the recurrent interpersonal experiences of the child, to face-to-face encounters between people who know each other—parents and children, siblings and peers, boys and girls, teachers and students. The constituents of the child's moral sense are therefore situational and interpersonal; nor can it be otherwise, for when the bases of conscience are laid down, the child is virtually incapable of abstraction, generalization and conceptual thought.

In adolescence, however, a major change in morality becomes possible. Adolescence brings new powers of cognition and new feelings—a capacity for logico-deductive thought and an urge for self-consistency, an ability to locate oneself in time and a need for historical relatedness, a talent for self-regulation and a will to stand unaided. Thus some adolescents are impelled toward a reexamination of childhood morals which psychoanalysts call a "rebellion against the parental superego"—thereby underlining the youth's need to repudiate his parents' words and deeds. The other function of this reexamination is less often discussed: it permits the adolescent to make conscious the unconscious constituents of his childhood superego and, by bringing them to light, to reject them or incorporate them into a developing sense of individuated selfhood. In the process, there may develop the beginning of an ethical sense beyond morals, a sense of the desirable and the undesirable that embraces and is supported by remnants of the childish conscience, but that transcends it in abstractness, historical realism, and consistency with other commitments and conceptions of self.

All of this may happen, but often it does not. For many youths, there is little "rebellion" against the potential tyrannies of conscience, and therefore little emancipation from the childhood superego. And for others—often those who are most vocal in their repudiations—rebellion ends in capitulation to a new alliance of a childish moral code with adult intolerance and fanaticism. But for at least a few, youth leads to the first development of a reflective ethical sense that may continue to deepen throughout life, to ethical aspirations that replace moral prescriptions, and to a new kind of morality that is a part of the self rather than a force alien to the self.

Morals, then, can be taught and transmitted with minimal loss from generation to generation, but ethics must be reachieved by each new generation. For this reason, the ethical attainments of one generation often degenerate into the moral homilies of the next. No matter how high their own ethical sense, parents can never simply bequeath it to their children. Children can only learn moral codes, and parents can only hope that their offspring will one day achieve for themselves a transmutation of morals to ethics that will betoken their emergence as individuated men and women.

Yet like many of the tokens of individuation, the ethical life is often difficult. A moral code provides a rule book for behavior, while an ethical system merely offers ideals without specifying the precise ways to attain them. The ethical man must often hesitate, reflect and ponder, while his moral fellow must merely obey his conscience. And a man who does obey his ingrained sense of morals can usually sleep with a clear conscience; but an ethical man can never be sure that he has chosen ethically. In his pursuit of the good, the ethical man continually risks conflict between his own ethics and the morals of his tribe, province or nation-state. To his moral fellows who consider Right and Duty self-evident, the ethical man will often seem a Hamlet or a traitor, struggling to reconcile action with aspiration while others act.

There is a rough parallel between the

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psychological and the historical development of ethics. For just as moral sense is psychologically earlier and more primitive, so the dominance of morals over ethics tends to characterize primitive and undifferentiated societies. Consider the realities of a small, isolated, primitive community. Life is relatively static, for social changes occur slowly, over a process of generations. Such communities are rarely confronted with other cultures, possessing other moral codes that might lead them to question their own. The significant events for which moral rules are needed are face-to-face encounters between men and women who have *known each other all of their lives. Since* in such societies the unexpected almost never happens, an inclusive rule book for human conduct is possible. Furthermore, as society changes but little, the morals of parents are fully adequate to the life realities of their children. Because society is simple, rules learned in the face-to-face situations of childhood can be directly applied to the face-to-face situations of adulthood. And finally, the moral code of such a community need apply only within the community: barbarians, slaves, foreigners and other "non-people" are beyond the pale of morals.

The emergence of ethics in a primitive society probably presupposes one or both of two conditions: contact with alien cultures or rapid social change. Culture contact, such as occurs when provincials first enter the city, juxtaposes two or more moral codes that make equal claim to self-evidence. Most men react, of course, with an even more tenacious, intolerant and moralistic grasp on their own moral code, coupled with strenuous efforts to convert or destroy those who challenge it. But there will sometimes be a few men who seek to reconcile apparently disparate sets of morals. This effort will require moving to a higher level of generality, seeking the Spirit that underlies the Letter, searching for universal principles of which specific codes can be shown to be mere instances. And those most likely to make this effort are men in whose personal lives the contradictory claims of conflicting codes are most deeply felt.

The second spur to ethical development, rapid social change, requires ethical innovation for another reason. A rapidly changing society continually creates unprecedented situations between men, their institutions and their technologies that could not be anticipated in the moral code of the previous generation. The development of irrigation, for example, required new distributive arrangements among men who formerly relied upon the egalitarian rain. For such new situations, new rules are required lest chaos result. A movement toward ethics is again possible, for new rules must be reconciled with old ones, and ever more general principles will be needed to effect their synthesis. To be sure, there are again alternatives to ethics: cruel autocracy and violent civil strife can also be ways of responding to rapid social change. But from some of those in whose own persons the tensions between past and present are greatest, ethical innovations may eventually come.

Neither culture contact nor social change guarantees the growth of ethics, any more than adolescence guarantees the development of ethical sense. The history of the world, although it is a tale of growing culture contact and accelerating social change, is by no means a history of the uninterrupted development of ethics. My point is rather that these historical conditions make the transition from morals to ethics possible, and that unless these challenges find a response in an emergent ethic, the results are likely to be a fanatic self-righteousness that seeks to destroy those who hold different moral values, and autocracy or murderous strife.

The mid-twentieth century is a time of culture contact and social change more extensive and rapid than ever before in history: the prerequisites for a world in which morals suffice have long since disappeared. Our contact with other cultures, coupled with the heterogeneity of our own, has shattered all possible complacency about the self-evidence of any one moral code. The rate of social change ensures that the

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unexpected happens daily, and no finite set of specific moral rules can ever hope to comprehend all of the dilemmas we meet in daily life. The fate of our complex society is fused to the fate of the entire world. And most important, we most desperately need guidelines not for simple face-to-face encounters with our friends and neighbors, but for the incredibly complex confrontations of nations, institutions and technologies upon which depends today the survival of life itself. Ours is a world where morals do not begin to meet our needs; yet it is also a world where too few men have a developed ethical sense, and where an adequate ethic hardly yet exists.

These considerations may help explain why symposia and discussions of morality multiply despite the high level of interpersonal decency, honesty and civility in most parts of the civilized world. I doubt that there has ever been a time when there were as many adequately moral men and women who treated their friends and neighbors so relatively well. Yet moral codes, with their roots in the simple interpersonal situations of childhood, simply tell us nothing at all about the rights and wrongs of corporate price-fixing, genocide, misleading advertising or atomic warfare. The merely moral man, once he wanders from his own neighborhood, is left without a map—trying, as it were, to apply Newtonian laws to quantum phenomena.

Or recall the puzzling modern observation, epitomized by the apparently drab and dutiful figure of Adolf Eichmann, that men can be so apparently moral and loyal in some spheres and yet so barbarously destructive in others. One need not be a Nazi, nor need one possess a seething caldron of unconscious sadism, in order to incinerate one's fellowmen. Witness the American bomber pilot who returned from dropping napalm on Vietnamese villagers with the comment, "I think we did good work today." "Good work"—cleaning out the garage, flying a routine mission, getting an "A" in math, executing the Final Solution. On television, he seemed a decent man with kindly wrinkles around his eyes, a moral man who loves his family, befriends his neighbors, lives uprightly and now serves his country.

This, in a way, illustrates the ghastly new potential of our age. As never before, a man need not be immoral, nor need he bear animosity toward his fellows, in order to be the effective instrument of their wanton destruction. No face-to-face encounter is needed—only the release of a switch. For all its horror, the encounter of the sadist and his victim is still a human encounter, and it is as old as mankind. What is new to our age is the growing possibility (and fact) that deeply moral men, who feel nothing at all about each other, may be the instruments of their mutual annihilation. When men no longer need confront each other as men, moral sense does not suffice to govern their dealings.

Yet even those who feel the need for an ethical sense beyond morals are often at a loss for ethical solutions to today's problems. The great ethical systems of the past have largely deteriorated into moral platitudes; moreover, because they were primarily intended to govern interpersonal relations, they are inadequate to the non-interpersonal dilemmas of the twentieth century. The dizzying pace of technological and social change has led to a proliferation of man-made techniques and institutions far more rapid than our ability to devise ways of considering them in ethical terms. Who, even a generation ago, could have anticipated the ethical dilemma of the architects and executors of Hiroshima? Perhaps ethical thought inevitably lags; perhaps it can only be the next generation that truly fathoms the problems of its forbears. And since ethical sense first begins to develop during adolescence, perhaps it is only youth who can think ethically about the problems for which their parents had no ethical answers.

But I think not. For the facts and aspirations from which any ethic adequate to our time must start seem to me already clear. The facts are two. First, our capacity through folly or error to destroy all life on earth ties together men's fates as never be-

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fore; this capacity makes obsolete all moral codes premised on concepts of purely national self-interest, national hegemony or national survival. And second, we are in the midst of what could be called a "cross-cultural implosion," whereby radical new techniques of communication (radio, television, films, communication satellites) enable men to understand each other across enormous barriers of language, faith and culture. This implosion of cultures makes realistic for the first time the age-old vision of a world culture; indeed it makes the attainment of that vision probable if only we can forestall holocaust so long. These two facts seem to me to make but one ethical aspiration adequate to our time: the aspiration to a genuine world community in which men, without losing their love of neighbor, parish and nation, also serve a higher ethical standard as citizens of the world. Adlai Stevenson was such a man, a profoundly ethical man; and his life and precept suggest that we need not await another generation to find an ethic adequate to our own.

In Our Time

ROGER L. SHINN

Mr. Shinn is professor of applied Christianity at Union Theological Seminary and adjunct professor of religion at Columbia University. He is the author of several books, most recently of Tangled World, *and is one of the editors of the biweekly journal,* Christianity and Crisis.

THE IMPRESSIVE QUALITY in this conversation, as I see it, is its combination of *insecurity* and *seriousness* about morality.

By insecurity I mean the awareness that all of us have in these times of the instability of inherited moral traditions, of the inadequacy of the mores of the past to meet the problems of the future, of the ways in which our ultimate certitudes have come out of transitory cultural situations. In the shift of moral practices and standards we see both the threat to precious values and the opportunity to achieve freedom and new possibilities for humanity. We are all insecure, in the desirable sense that we cannot solve moral problems by reliance on habit and that we have to examine every moral conviction and assumption.

By seriousness I mean the unanimous concern that talk about morality is both possible and worthwhile. None of the spokesmen advocates the thesis of Ivan Karamazov and his many heirs that "all things are permitted." None indulges in the positivistic assertion, so recently in vogue, that ethical assertions are merely emotive and not subjects for intelligible discussion. I am curious as to whether this agreement is a true clue to our cultural situation or an accident hinging on the selection of the panelists.

The Symposium suggests to me a way of understanding some of the moral confusions of our time. I start with Philip Hallie's impressive description of the moral experience. This experience occurs in the context of decision. It is always immediate and concrete. It involves specific personal relations and personal claims. All our theories of values and moral principles—theories that I do not despise, because they

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can be useful—are several steps removed from the primitive moral experience, which is not general but specific.

I agree further with Mr. Hallie that the basic quality of morality is *awareness*. The task of the prophet or seer is not to harangue people into moral exploits but, in the words of Kierkegaard, "to make people aware." This is why theology usually maintains that ethics is more basically a matter of indicatives than of imperatives. To exhort a man to love his neighbor is futile unless he sees the other person as his neighbor; and when he recognizes the neighbor, the exhortation is scarcely necessary. This is also why theology sees the basis of all morality in revelation—the experience in which one becomes aware, the experience when the other person (perhaps my racial or national enemy) is revealed to me as my fellow human being and my neighbor. And revelation is always particular. It is related to Mount Sinai or a Bo tree or Golgotha. It may issue in attempts to state universal truths (the Ten Commandments or the Four Noble Truths), but these efforts are derivative and even they are imbedded in particular cultural traditions.

The trouble is that we cannot stop with the immediate moral experience in its vivid concreteness. We must reflect upon it.

Without reflection the particularity of moral experience becomes provincialism. Impulse may be confused with insight. Vivid personal feelings may displace a less powerful sensitivity to the needs of others, or crusaders may indulge in "the dangerous fanaticism of idealism" (Edmund Fuller). Rational processes do not always correct these errors; they may intensify them by devious rationalization. Perhaps in the last analysis only moral insight can purge amoral indifference or immoral passion. But reflection can help.

Hence morality contains a drive from the particular toward the universal. All the panelists in this Symposium are in some sense moral "absolutists." René Dubos and Mr. Fuller talk frankly of "eternal values." Daniel Bell and Dr. Murray prefer to think of moral evolution, but both are sure that mutuality is morally superior to in-group tribalism and cruelty. David Garnett is especially sensitive to the impermanence of ethical achievements, but he finds this very fact to be a matter for "terrifying reflection."

This drive to universalize the ethical insight is, I should think, essential to the nature of ethical reflection. Yet it always threatens to falsify ethics by turning concrete immediacy to abstraction. This constant source of confusion in ethical reflection is not due simply to human stupidity and sin (although stupidity and sin are perennial sources of ethical difficulties); it is inherent in the nature of moral experience and the demands of reflection. The problem is at least as old as Plato, and it is with us today.

But if the problem is ancient and perennial, it takes particularly perplexing forms in our time. I suggest two examples.

First, the nature of modern society extends the scope of moral obligation far beyond the immediate human relations that prompt the moral experience. Modern man is required to recognize as his neighbor not only the person whom he sees but the many persons whom he will never see. It may be more urgent for a man of power in Manhattan to recognize as his neighbors the citizens of Communist China than it was for the man in Manhattan a generation ago to acknowledge as neighbors the people of Brooklyn. Even if we assume good will (which is certainly not to be taken for granted), contemporary morality requires a tremendous act of imagination. Love, sympathy and forgiveness—the most personal of human qualities—must find expression in somewhat abstract forms of concern for masses of nameless people who can never enter our direct experience. The scientific imagination, which has wrought this interrelated civilization, is far easier to develop than the moral imagination, which extends human awareness around the globe.

Second, our urban and industrial society institutionalizes human relations to a high degree. This means that moral concern, which arises out of personal awareness,

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must work itself out in impersonal social mechanisms. I do not wish to minimize in the least the opportunities our society brings for freedom and for personal and interpersonal expression. But I would insist that ethical responsibility cannot be limited to face-to-face relations. Perhaps it never could be; certainly it cannot be now. Any concern for the victims of poverty or racial prejudice, if it would go beyond paternalistic charity, must lead to interest in the laws of the land, in housing, in the intricate economic devices that create or deny opportunities for persons. Thus moral responsibility requires not only imagination but immense technical skill.

The issues of morality have never been easy for mankind. We human beings have always had to struggle with "the killer latent in every man" (Mr. Fuller) and the "incapacity for awareness" (Mr. Hallie). That struggle continues. Today it takes place within a civilization whose technical achievements have opened up moral opportunities and moral threats unprecedented in any past age.

The World A Zoo?

THEODORE R. SIZER

Mr. Sizer is dean of the Faculty of Education at Harvard University. An historian, he is author of Secondary Schools at the Turn of the Century *and* The Age of the Academies.

PERHAPS WE'RE ALL apes in a vast London zoo unable to settle upon a code of conduct and thus doomed to progressively irrational moral psychosis. Indeed we're probably worse off than the apes as we have behavioral scientists to diagnose our maladies and tell us just how rotten we really are. Clearly our cages are narrowing at an increasing rate and, also, changing their character. We have difficulty living with ourselves when we have the power to destroy ourselves. What shall we do when we learn artificially to create or to govern the nature of the creation of life? How will we ever learn to live with *that* knowledge?

The Symposium agrees that morality isn't innate (although some of it is: who disputes the deep moral dimension of a mother's love?). It further appears to agree with Edmund Fuller that "morality is above custom and taboo." Clearly personal moralities must blend with familial, tribal and societal moralities for the sake of survival (another innate "good"?); but these moralities tend more to be of passing expediencies than of timelessness. As the shape of the tribe changes, so, most likely, must its moralities. Which brings us back to the zoo. If morality is to be above the societal urge for survival, how is it to be defined and how brought to bear?

Dr. Henry Murray's "elementary notion of morality . . . an individual's attainment of some capacity to choose, consciously and deliberately, between alternatives that are more or less right or wrong in terms of an accepted moral standard," and Mr. Fuller's "groping toward something we can dignify with the word morality" through successive "I will" and "I won't" decisions made against some kind of vague standard, come closest to an answer. Implied in each is a code with two levels: a high "moral essence" vague and pliant enough to withstand

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changes within the society (perhaps what G. E. Moore was talking about); and a set of central questions that are constantly reanswered against the backdrop of this "essence" and in the light of conditions at a given time. The "essence" is of more than innate qualities and, obviously, is "above anthropology." Perhaps, as David Garnett would argue, it is a form of Judeo-Christian morality. Or perhaps it is, as Worth Hedden would have it, "caring." The questions are the classic "should I" or "should I not" dilemmas that have marked man's life—and literature—since time immemorial.

If one accepts this two-tiered view of the problem, one must accept the notion that, operatively, morality is a relative thing. Dr. Murray considers it a ratio of grays rather than blacks or whites. This is abhorrent to some; and yet relativeness, while posing the problem of constant revision, is necessary as society does change. While an abstract "essence" may give man a distant beacon, he has many intermediate decisions to make on the route, and he must make these with regard both to the beacon and to local conditions. To change the metaphor, given a constitution, man needs to take on the burden of constant reevaluation of the meaning of this constitution. And it is a burden.

Much was made in the Symposium of the personal nature of morality, of the making of "I will–I will not" decisions. Clearly question-asking is intensely personal, but the effects of few individuals' decisions can remain theirs alone. Father's answers affect son. Teacher's affect student. Lawyer's affect client. President's affect nations. Personal answers must survive the debate they inevitably cause, and if they offer a new direction, their usefulness in their time is a function both of the strength of their argument and of the climate that the changing society affords. We can easily see examples of changing answers: birth control is the most dramatic one. Who would have thought even ten years ago that an American President could take a public position on this issue and the Congress could study it? There are other situations for which "new" answers are forthcoming and with which we are yet not ready to deal, among them euthanasia and abortion. The strength of our memories of past wars makes us curiously prefer shells and napalm to any gas warfare, even a variety in which those affected are immobilized for a short period of time. It's somehow more moral to kill our enemies for good with bullets. The questions of morality remain the same, only the answers vary, sometimes sadly.

Anarchy, another kind of zoo, each of the rootless animals a law unto himself? This is the world as we know it. But our world with its imperfections and in a halting way works: how then is it wholly a macabre zoo? It is a place where the decisions are made by animals who have the right to make the wrong decisions, immoral decisions. How immoral? They are not governed by a distant target, by a governing ideal (thou shalt not kill); and they are not relevant to the real situation of the present (atom bomb a million people today so as to prevent, possibly, the killing of two million tomorrow). How does one prevent wrong decisions and foster right ones? Leadership.

The issue really is here, and the Symposium failed to discuss this side of the question. Morality, save for that significant part that appears to be "innate," is man-made—and man-destroyable. It is the wisdom of men that prevents the latter; that is, of course, what the organized church is, or should be, all about. The "essence" must be identified and communicated. The "questions" for conduct need to be spread abroad. So many err merely for the absence not of an answer but a question. Criteria must be developed and debated. And the forum for debate of "answers" needs to be guarded. How tempting it is to squash debates on matters of moral import, for these are close to our nerves. This temptation must be resisted.

This is all very procedural, but then again the working out of a moral code is procedural. It has the virtue of putting

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responsibility for the working of a moral system on leaders. It is all too easy to be cynical about topics such as "morality" and equally easy to avoid the thistles that present themselves when one tries to be explicit either for one's own or for others' benefit. The public schools' unwillingness to get seriously into this subject is as much fear of the sophistication of the problem as concern over the so-called church-state issue. It is equally easy to lapse into the academic escape of talking not about morality but about what what's-his-name said about morality. As Philip Hallie puts it, "the opposite of morality is abstraction. The opposite of morality is indifference . . ."

The Symposium did not duck the issue and seemed to have several areas of agreement or of common bias. The emphasis on the "nature of man" as the scientist knows him and the virtual exclusion from the discussion of the role of the church are signs of the times. Yet there *was* agreement that morality is "above anthropology," above Pavlov's dogs. Only Dr. Murray's belief that "a goal that's forever out of reach is damaging to the psyche" gives me pause; but I feel I want to hear more from him on that point. And more is needed to be said on the nature of this "essence" of morality.

There was agreement that morality assumed a position taken, assumed an act. This was seen as an individual matter. I see it too as a problem of wise leadership. Without such leadership we may yet resemble apes in the London zoo.

Coming in Winter . . .

THE AMERICAN IMPACT ABROAD

by

George D. Lillibridge

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ART AND LETTERS

In the Hand or in the Bush?

ROGER DU BEARN

La Finta Giardiniera is a small and youthful opera by Mozart, which was produced before the composer was twenty. When I was young myself, a bit later, I saw it performed in New York at the Music Box Theatre, which holds perhaps a hundred and thirty persons. Richard Crookes, the tenor, sang the big role. It was exquisite, comic, heartbreaking, even though the text of the piece is silly and not coherent in its silliness. There were other defects: Crookes already had a big "wave" or *judder,* as the English say, in his voice. As for *la finta*—the pretended gardeneress—she was not a *prima,* or not yet. I cannot recall her name, although I can see and hear her, which is enough to revive my delight.

Why was this trivial affair that ran only a few nights unforgettable? Mozart was not then in much favor. One can of course attribute the effect to my youth and susceptibility. I should be the first to suggest this, if I had not even then scanned my reasons for being moved. Although young, I had seen and heard a good deal of operatic music in all sorts of places, most of it loudly applauded and throbbingly reviewed. But most of it also was fine only by fits and starts. Even at the big theaters one had to lend the management one's recollections of high art or one's general goodwill. Fame, excitement, noise, visible expense, carried off the evening but left one nervously unfulfilled. At the Music Box, on the contrary, every detail was adjusted to its intention. Mozart had seen to that first. He follows the clumsy text with fidelity and strengthens it as he goes—a remedial fidelity, so to speak, that winds up in a dramatic finale foreshadowing the later masterpieces.

To do this, to be consecutive in one's ideas and have the power to carry them out in the same way—*that* is to be an artist. In an art dependent on execution the artist's fidelity must naturally be matched by the performers'. And this is what happened on that little stage forty years ago. The audience sat so near that nothing could be faked. The scenery, costumes, gestures, facial expressions, vocal inflections, and that inner rhythm which is the carrier of meaning (called sincerity in life's affairs) gave us what we were looking for: a work of art.

I have avoided saying that the production was perfect. I have in fact intimated that it was not. Perfection is not the point, intention is. The defects, as in all good things, were accidental, not radical. What was to be done had been understood by all the players, and understood in the same way—a rare occurrence in music or the theater, for it is extremely difficult to play what's written. Each performer's shortcomings lead him to twist things a little in his favor, and even this is as nothing to the temptation of helping out the author with an effect of one's own. It is when none of this occurs that the performance is *of that*

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work, and then the fleeting failures of the body do not matter because there are none of the spirit.

This kind of artistry is out of fashion nowadays. Our temper does not lend itself to so simple a plan as being single-minded. Mozart had the chance to make the story hang together because he was a man and not a committee. In performance, the only hope of oneness lies, regrettably, in a director who directs. He need not be a tyrant in manner, but if he is to be consecutive he cannot be expected to submit the effect of a scene to the judgment of the electrician or the usherette, even if to rule them out seem discriminatory.

Why did anybody ever think of dividing authority in the collaborative arts? Well, there is the pretext of the box office. The impresario wonders, Where can I find the typical eye whose gleam will guarantee that ten thousand others will feel the same? This normal panic defines the artistic merit of the Music Box, with its hundred and thirty seats. Nowadays the recourse to casual judgments, not in art alone but in business as well, springs also from a diffuse nervousness, connected with prestige and the search for distinction. Doing things so artfully that they seem natural is sure to pass unnoticed. To merge one's powers with those of the company and the orchestra leader and the humble chorus is to sink the ego into the work instead of thrusting it at the all-too-innocent audience. No, you will not succeed in gaining or keeping a reputation unless you achieve "visibility" by something offbeat and therefore chatworthy. Offbeat is better than on beat even in music; which does not mean that there are not fine and faithful artists today, on the podium and behind the footlights, but they either owe their high place to doggedness or they are not commonly given as high a place as they deserve.

But if neat adjustment, irreproachable technique, and single-minded purpose make the artist, why despise the polish that the mass media exact of their participants? Well, in the first place, the virtues I have tried to describe "make the artist" only in the sense of satisfying a kind of entrance requirement. The gradations above rise by steps that cannot be defined to heights that cannot be measured. In the second place, the performers for the mass audience are not subjected to a coherent idea so much as to a mechanical formula. The difference is this: the formula will not tolerate a stumble; the formula is a convenient scheme for making an appeal to the commonest sentiments; there is no idea behind it or coming forth from it. That is why we call its execution slick, which is to say featureless. Its application makes a peculiar noise: what is slick clicks.

Getting used to the smooth clicks is as bad as getting used to the rackety frauds of the big productions in world-famous places. In both cases the audience no longer knows what it should demand; it is satisfied too soon and too regularly. When it is vaguely and rightly displeased, it doesn't know why. For example, in difficult plays like *Lear* or *Danton's Death* and in "revivals" of Gluck or Weber, polite boredom in the pit never finds its voice, and the critics contrive reasons why it is best not to go in for these dull ecstasies too often. If art were felt and understood, the very word "revive" would be banned as an offense. Whoever attempts to interpret such works ought to know that his chief care must be, not indeed to "breathe life" into them, but to avoid crushing out their native vitality under his unequalled professional experience.

The business of "life" will take care of itself wherever art is present. It is absurd to keep praising as we do the biographer or historian for making his characters—"his," mind you—"come alive." If he does his journeyman work properly and they were lively people, they will live in his pages. He is not the father or the Holy Ghost. He is only a writer who knows his craft and stays behind the scenes. The rest are but licensed asphyxiators. But the difficulty in knowing one's craft is to know its limits—and to play what's written, whether it be music or history. This double duty is common to the arts and likewise to productions not readily associated with heaven-storming endeavors, such as the making of

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reference books and the editing of magazines. The firm hand and the consecutive mind are scarce everywhere, which is why the symposiums that publishers love to bring out on contemporary issues are preposterous ruins and why a work like the *Dictionary of American Biography* is a noble edifice.

Having begun with a musical illustration of what I mean by the consecutive mind, I shall finish with another that the word "ruins" recalls to me. This past summer for the first time, the Epidaurus Festival, held in the ancient amphitheater, invited a foreign company to participate. The Paris Opera responded with the offer to present in that wonderful olive grove Berlioz's *Damnation of Faust*. Now this setting of Goethe's poem necessarily carries the imagination to northern Germany and its legends. Why stage it in southern Greece? Moreover, the score is for concert performance and entirely unsuitable for staging. Thirdly, if Berlioz was to receive this signal honor, was it not possible to remember that he had composed two complete operas on ancient themes, one of which, *The Capture of Troy,* might seem to have a certain appropriateness for a theater originally dedicated to Greek tragedy? But no, there was in such considerations a fatal fitness. Art cannot be bound down to logic and good sense. It is much more exciting to plan for Mephisto and Gretchen's dark entanglement under the luminous sky of Epidaurus. Never mind, never mind!—all the modern frenzy for the arts and all the taxpayers' money going to quench it cannot help causing a stir. True, but the stir will not in a thousand years give us the joy of one little thing done right.

A SPECIAL ISSUE

It is becoming obvious that many of us are living in yesterday, not very well aware of the present revolution in the field of cybernetics. One might say that the electronic age and computer culture are already here, although not visible to many. In recognition of this situation THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR *plans to devote the Spring issue to a consideration of just what these new developments may mean to established human interests, prejudices and convictions.*

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Sermon

HOLLIS SUMMERS

I wish to appear neither as evangel
Nor eccentric. However, I wish to appear.
And I am willing to run the risks involved;
Rejecting heads protected by hoods and veils,
Applauding faces worn by facing weather,
I admit nakedness and its rich necessity.

Still I polish the bottoms of my shoes.

And I advocate such concern with invisible
Outward appearances, even to the painting of sepulchers
In abandoned foreign country cemeteries.
Although we rarely walk through air or water
At least at least we may walk in polished leather
On oil, and excrement, and tapestry

✪ HOLLIS SUMMERS is the author of three novels and two volumes of poetry. *Seven Occasions,* his second volume of poetry, was published earlier this year. In 1964 he was named Distinguished Professor at Ohio University where he teaches.

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Portrait

Alexander Meiklejohn

ARTHUR UPHAM POPE

The death of Alexander Meiklejohn in Berkeley last December, at the age of ninety-two, closed a life of exceptional quality and significance, not only for the academic world but for the entire nation. At memorial services in Washington, New York and San Francisco, famous men assembled to praise him and his achievement. They represented a variety of sources and a notable range of status and experience, but their appraisals were in striking unanimity. Several said, "Here passed one of the great men of our time." All agreed that he was "a superlatively great teacher," that "his influence was incalculable." The tributes to his personal character were eloquent and touching. Especially impressive were the estimates of his crucial contributions to the constitutional guarantees of political freedom. Professor Thomas I. Emerson of the Yale Law School said that Meiklejohn's "work on the First Amendment constitutes a major contribution to one of the most critical problems of modern times." Justice William Douglas wrote: "He did much to free the First Amendment of the legalisms that had been grafted on it, and make it a living, vivid force in our jurisprudence."

How could a mere professor of logic and metaphysics make such a decisive impression on our lives and times? Does it mean that philosophers really ought to be kings? And how could a man without any legal training effect such a fundamental and far-reaching contribution? The value of his constitutional theory will in due time be specifically appraised by professionals. As for Meiklejohn as scholar, teacher and human being, how did he become what he was?

Like Immanuel Kant before him, he learned the categorical imperative from his mother. From his hardworking father, the soul of integrity, he came to understand social sympathy and responsibility. From both, and from his whole environment, he absorbed and never forgot the point of view of the working class. His parents had joined the Rochdale cooperative movement and this taught him the values of mutual aid, and also made him aware of the ambitions and capacities of working men and women as well as the harsh injustices from which they too often suffered. From the poetry of Robert Burns he absorbed stimulus to the imagination and sensitivity to the values of the humble, and the deeper meanings that can be divulged by the commonplace.

Most of all he profited by a very happy and secure childhood. He adored his parents and was on warmest terms with his brothers. From this family environment he learned an inner peace, free from disguised fears, hostilities, frustrations, leaving him free to concentrate all his powers on his task. But this peace within had no taint of self-superiority; he was always a rather

✪ ARTHUR UPHAM POPE was an intimate friend of Alexander Meiklejohn. At Brown University he took all of Dr. Meiklejohn's courses in philosophy; later he served as his assistant there and at Amherst College. Dr. Pope, a specialist in the art of Persia, organized the Asia Institute of which he has been chancellor since 1929. He is now president of the International Association for Iranian Art and Archaeology.

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shy man, but this promoted, rather than hampered, the finest kinds of personal relations.

His commitment to freedom, which was fundamental and absolute, was partly a Scottish inheritance. Already as a boy he was familiar with the heroic but stubborn fights that the Scots had made for independence. The English commitment to political freedom, especially freedom of speech, also became part of him. His passionate love for America and for the liberty that he found here was set off, so he himself recounted, by the exhilarating contrast, which he keenly felt as an immigrant boy, between the open land in the United States and the restrictions of the English countryside. Here, he realized, anyone could roam at will; there the ordinary public was impeded by hedges, walls, forbidding signs—frustrations that made one feel unwanted, constrained. Here there was the open road and everyone was really free: this was what America was.

But before he was a philosopher, and thereafter also, he was a devotee of sports in the finest sense. Sports played a role in the life and mind of Meiklejohn that was fundamental and creative, not just because they were for him a joyous activity, but also because he found that they supplied modes of intense activity rationalized and humanized by rules that were accepted and honored by the participants. In the confrontation of mock battle each contestant must summon and concentrate his utmost powers of skill, endurance and courage, and for a while live at the stretch—temporarily a superman. Not only did he value the exhilaration of contest, but he felt that, through joint respect for the rules and the opponent, the player became more of a person.

Meiklejohn was first-class in some games: he was captain of the first American ice hockey team, in cricket, a superb bowler, at soccer fast and clever, and he was a good, although not brilliant, tennis player (for fifty years, however, steadily improving his game). He reveled in the ferocities of hockey and apparently never lost his temper or his relish for the game. He had a good physique for sport—light, lithe and tough—but his primary qualifications were moral and intellectual. He always knew what he was doing or ought to be doing and why. He was keen in estimating the qualities of his opponent, never lost courage, and was never the least sullen in defeat, or overelated in victory; an ideal partner in tennis.

A climb up a rough and pathless little mountain, which for his companions was a disagreeable struggle with tangled undergrowth and slipping rocks, tolerable for the sake of the view at the top, was for him a fine game—man against mountain. A tough fast row across an open lake to land a friend at a distant station was not a task but a sporting event: man against wind and wave. For Meiklejohn a happy alliance between the playing fields of Eton, the Agora and the Groves of Academe was natural and productive. It was, moreover, the same with his thinking: mind against chaos and obscurity, intelligence against stupidity and indifference—a hard battle, indeed, but with the flavor of a sporting event, not to be won by dogmatism or emotionally motivated affirmations, but by confrontation and debate.

Meiklejohn became a philosopher both by instinct and from necessity: his integrity quite forbade any facile or evasive solution of the conflict between his early faith and the new findings of science. Darwinian controversies were still raging, and the critical examination of the Bible—a book that was an important early influence on Meiklejohn's thinking—was causing widespread dismay. It was a situation that required honesty, courage and thinking of the most serious kind. The answers might be found in philosophy. No doubt Meiklejohn had also other motives, but he spoke only of this, and then only very briefly. In any case he did not talk much about himself.

Trained in the Sage School of Philosophy at Cornell University (at the time there was none better for relentless thoroughness), he turned in a serious thesis on Kant's theory of substance.

Heraclitus' dictum that the "strife of opposites sustains the world" could have been his motto. Socrates was his hero and he

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was saturated with the early dialogues and lived the Socratic ideal with unparalleled fidelity, not by imitation but by natural character formulated in principles and commitments. His confidence that the other man and the alternative view had essential contributions to make, that debate was a cooperative enterprise of mutual value with a common goal, the truth—these were central assumptions in all Meiklejohn's thinking and teaching.

The metaphysical problems of Plato did not long detain him, but the *Theaetetus* he regarded as an inexhaustible masterpiece; the problems of knowledge were always close to his heart. Of the moderns, Kant was his great love, and there he had a real mastery, especially of the *Critique of Pure Reason*. He was dissatisfied with the way that the *Critique* was often taught—measured by time and pages which are regular and equal, instead of ideas which are not. The first term of his course on Kant got through only the first hundred pages, but that included the difficult Deduction of the Categories which Meiklejohn thought was the heart of Kant's philosophy. Students were rewarded as the exciting conclusion, which he made them earn, finally emerged, formulated with his contagious exultation and deep feeling: "Mind builds the world"—a simple phrase, indeed, but, how deep!

He took fire from Fichte's eloquence and absolute dedication. Hegel was for him a great master but not exempt from critical examination. The theory of the world as akin to a developing mind seemed to him a technical fulfillment of the Socratic dialectic, the thoughtful exploration of contradiction and the evocation of the productive synthesis of opposites. In both Kant and Hegel, Meiklejohn's equipment was sounder than in most contemporary teaching, at least so it seemed to his advanced students who later had experience in other universities. Among the philosophers writing at that time, Bernard Bosanquet seemed to him to have come nearer to the truth, and he could wax almost rhapsodical over Bosanquet's treatment of some passages in *Logic or the Morphology of Knowledge*—not a very lyrical title: but there Meiklejohn found solutions to vexatious problems and, what was more far-reaching, the still-to-be-explored implications.

One of Meiklejohn's heroes was E. Benjamin Andrews, president of Brown during Meiklejohn's early years, and an inspiring influence. Andrews' courage, his zest for life, complete dedication to ideas, scorn of mediocrity and of mere routine business, all delighted Meiklejohn: "He was a maker of men because he had a mad, impetuous vision of what a man may be. He wanted something done, something accomplished in the spirit of man. For him administration was Idea guiding and controlling circumstance. It was not, as many men demand it should be made, mere circumstances slipping smoothly past each other in the flow of time."

As a teacher Meiklejohn was incomparable. In the first place, he loved teaching and he was convinced that teaching was of crucial importance, that the college, not the vast university, was the natural and indispensable leader of the community; that it could in turn create leaders, devoted, tolerant, critical-minded, with a tight hold on fundamentals. He also felt that philosophy, as an "unusually stubborn attempt to think clearly" (a phrase of James's which Meiklejohn was fond of quoting), would be of primal value in approaching the vast complex of problems associated with modern industrial society.

Meiklejohn's teaching—and his personality—elude verbal description. Homer never attempted to describe Helen save in terms of her effect on others: "And when she took her evening walk, the old men leaned over the wall to watch her pass." Meiklejohn's students responded to him with affection, enthusiasm and loyalty. They felt themselves grow up under his leadership. They admired his courage, his sporting challenge and his complete freedom from any kind of bluff, of which students are heartless connoisseurs. They were grateful for the respect that he showed for them. He touched the deeper layers of their lives, helped them to articulate vague and neglected ambitions. They caught the excite-

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ment of the intellectual quest, learned from him new standards of clear thinking, respect for the rigors of logic, and the creative power that this could confer.

But his services were to more than to his students. Although quite adroit in deflating pomposities and disintegrating dogmas, his opponents were nearly all disarmed by his perfect courtesy, his goodwill and tolerance. Some eminent minds acknowledged their debt to him. Also—for him more important—he made the humblest feel esteemed and wanted, for many were passionately grateful to him for renewed faith in themselves and the release of unsuspected resources.

In the summer of 1964 Meiklejohn shared in a month-long debate at the Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions. The theme was the search for a philosophy of the First Amendment. Strong differences of opinion developed between him and other members of the group. Of the discussion his former pupil and lifelong friend, Scott Buchanan, wrote:

> Rather to our surprise, as the talk continued we discovered over and over again that wherever we went in our minds, Alec had been there and met us coming back. I had made this discovery in my undergraduate days at Amherst . . . and it has happened many times since . . .

Although completely free from oratorical ambitions and indeed scarcely aware of his talents, Meiklejohn was an eloquent speaker. His convincing power not only evoked excited response but also often achieved lasting results, reaching new and large audiences in his post-Amherst days. Before he went to Amherst he had done very little public speaking, but one speech that he made at Brown University in 1904 is still, after more than sixty years, a thrilling memory for those who heard it.

A moral crisis intensely involved the whole student body. In an effort to curb the professionalism in sports that was steadily encroaching on the purposes and standards of academic life, Brown had formally acceded to the Ivy League rule classifying summer baseball, with its thinly disguised financial rewards for players, as a professional occupation that disqualified participants from playing on college teams. In 1904 Brown had an extraordinary team (all of whom had played summer baseball) and it was agreed that the season would be a procession of victories for Brown, leading to a sure championship rating. Students and alumni spent much time in luxurious contemplation of the prospect. When the rule against summer baseball came up, it was dismissed with the argument that, since all the other colleges violated it, no one could expect Brown to make the painful sacrifice of its marvelous expectations.

There were twinges of conscience, however, and the matter was put before a general meeting of the University. Meiklejohn's speech at that meeting was of such incandescent power that no one afterward remembered what the other speakers said. His argument was much like Socrates' in the *Crito*: we made a voluntary commitment, binding ourselves to honor it. No argument for repudiation has been advanced, save that to have to keep our word would be an unpleasant task. Shall we forget that such a repudiation would have other and more serious consequences after the victory celebrations are finished—a damaged reputation and the self-damage from having broken our pledged word for the sake of temporary gratification? Is this what you really want? It was logic on fire and it reduced the opposition to ashes and elevated a reluctant audience to high enthusiasm. The marvelous team was reluctantly but firmly disqualified, although many alumni who hadn't heard the speech were furious.

The strength of Meiklejohn's speaking, then and since, lay in his absolute sincerity, his relentless devotion to ethical and intellectual aims. The clarity and coherence of his argument were reinforced by his flaming but controlled emotional intensity. Professor Joseph Tussman said of him: "He had . . . great rhetorical power. . . . But this power to move and convince was given to a man who saw that, as a teacher, his mission was not to convince but to cultivate, not to subdue but to strengthen."

Although Meiklejohn was always involved in tense controversial issues—educa-

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tional, legal, social—he maintained inner contentment, looking upon himself as blessed by fortune. He was especially happy in his marriage to Helen Everett, the daughter of Walter Goodnow Everett, his colleague at Brown. She was competent, gay, enthusiastic and courageous, with a complete commitment to his values, ethical and intellectual. Their life was a continuing cooperative achievement. Only recently he wrote: "we have glorious times together."

His intense but realistic devotion to human welfare deepened his distress at the political confusions, especial frustrations of good causes and postwar outrages against some of the fundamentals of American ideals, a sea of troubles which he met with soul, well-knit and all his spiritual battles won, and against which he pitted as best as he could his faith in the power of critical intelligence armed by moral purpose.

The extraordinary influence beyond his own professional field to which the memorial services attested was possible because of a combination of superb intelligence and an ethical commitment of the highest order, together with persistence, patience and disarming goodwill, effectively focused when there was a public need. His qualities were not separate traits but the varied expression of a singularly compact and unified personality. Meiklejohn wrote of his friend, R. H. Tawney: "His emotional commitments matched his intellectual insight—there was no break in his inner integrity." This characterization was deeply true of Meiklejohn himself.

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The Revolving Bookstand . . . . . .

Orientations

JAMES DICKEY

THE LOST WORLD. *By Randall Jarrell. Macmillan. $3.95.* 77 DREAM SONGS. *By John Berryman. Farrar, Straus. $3.95.* TO WHAT STRANGERS, WHAT WELCOME. *By J. V. Cunningham. Alan Swallow. $1.75.* SELECTED POEMS. *By Louis Simpson. Harcourt, Brace & World. $4.95.* THE WRECK OF THE THRESHER. *By William Meredith. Knopf. $4.* A ROOF OF TIGER LILIES. *By Donald Hall. Viking. $3.50.* TO BUILD A FIRE. *By Melville Cane. Harcourt, Brace & World. $3.75.* ROOTS AND BRANCHES. *By Robert Duncan. Scribner's. $4.50.*

When you read

> At last I go to Mama in her gray
> Silk, to Pop, to Dandeen in her black
> Silk. I put my arms around them, they
> Put their arms around me. Then I go back
> To my bedroom; I read as I undress. . .

either before or after

> Henry Hankovitch, con guitar,
> did a short Zen pray,
> on his tatami in a relaxed lotos
> fixing his mind on nuffin, rose-blue breasts,
> and gave his parnel one French kiss. . .

you are struck forcibly—not to say traumatically—by the difference in the *approaches* to poetry exemplified by the two writers. The difference is absolutely fundamental. In the first passage, by Randall Jarrell, it is obvious that the poet is primarily interested in the reader's *having* the experience that the poem itself is trying to have, that the writer is attempting to repossess for himself. The poem is intended as no more than a pane of glass—perhaps with slight powers of magnification—through which the reader enters the depicted situation to live and learn from it as he is able. In contrast, the second passage, from John Berryman's *77 Dream Songs,* is fascinated by its own verbal surface, by its sheer linguistic possibilities, its syntactical permutations and combinations, its manipulative prestidigitorial promises. The approaches are both good ones in the right hands, and these books abundantly demonstrate that fact. Yet one is also struck by the curious limitations of both methods when they are carried to the extremes to which Jarrell and Berryman take them.

In Jarrell, for example, there is a pervasive and disquieting flatness, and there also seems to be a kind of tacit assumption that if you mention enough things that everybody sees and uses in his daily life—particularly in his domestic life—you are putting the stamp of Verifiableness on your poem, authenticating it, writing not from books but from the World, from Life. This attitude has always seemed to me to be a mistaken assumption on Jarrell's part, although I must admit to liking a great many poems that proceed from it. It is surely true that Jarrell has enormous wit and intelligence and a deep and tender compassion, particularly for the helpless and the bewildered. But he generally does not hold out long enough for the truly telling phrase, for the rhythm that matches most exactly

✪ JAMES DICKEY's most recent volume of poems is *Helmets.* Last year he gave poetry readings at many campuses throughout the United States.

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the subject, the image, the voice. He does not search diligently enough for the thing that is his own beyond the thing that is owned both by him and all those aging housewives pushing carts in the supermarkets, those lost children, those women at the Washington Zoo: the thing that he, because he is a very talented poet, could say of their situation, and that they could not possibly say. In his criticism Jarrell often seems arrogant and superior, but in his poetry he is entirely too humble, too awed by Reality to change it for his own purposes, and for the betterment of his poems. Women in supermarkets are ordinary, and Jarrell's poems about them are, sadly, ordinary in much the same way that they are. He deliberately forbids himself to say anything about them that they wouldn't say about themselves, and consequently one often has the sensation of watching Stirling Moss embarrassedly but patiently driving a child's kiddie car. But Jarrell's method has produced many very good poems, although not so many good lines or memorable phrases. The cumulative effect of several of these pieces—"Woman," "A Hunt in the Black Forest"—is very great. When the truth of the World, of Fact, fuses with the higher or deeper truth of the artist, as in some of these poems and in an infrequent few of their phrases (woman, for example, as "naked on my doorstep, in the sun / Gold-armed, white-breasted, pink-cheeked, and black-furred"), we get one of the major orientations, the literally experiential, at its finest, and at such times Jarrell shows as its foremost exponent in American letters.

Berryman is something else: a poet so preoccupied with poetic effects as to be totally in their thrall. If Jarrell's Longinian pitfall is flatness, his is mannerism. His inversions, his personal and often irritatingly cute colloquialisms and deliberate misspellings, his odd references, his basing of lines and whole poems on private allusions, create what must surely be the densest verbal thickets since Empson's. Jarrell's poetry must seem *natural,* and naturally-said, to be successful. Berryman has thrown all such techniques out a very high window, and has gone—somewhat like a Hopkins drunk on twentieth-century history, culture and newsprint—for the supreme artificiality, the mannerism that may become with luck an unmistakable Style. Jarrell's is really an antistyle, somewhat in the same fashion as the style Stendhal advocated when he urged young novelists to pattern their prose on the Code Napoléon. But Berryman's is a style beyond style, a constructed and magnificently unnatural style which concedes almost nothing to the reader. Henry and Mr. Bones, the classic figures, eternal opposites, foils, comics, straight men and semblables of minstrel shows, go through such a variety of anguished acts, change into so many costumes and dialects, comment so curiously and deeply on such a wide range of subjects, that the reader feels distinctly that he is having to learn—is, exhilaratingly, learning—a new language, a kind of Berryman Esperanto, through reading the poems.

Berryman, although not a natural poet, although anything but natural-sounding, is sometimes very nearly a great poet. The manipulations are always apparent, the reader's muscles are always tense with the straining of the poem to lift itself by its bootstraps. Yet when the weight is up—at untold cost—it is still up, although dangerously and precariously, and Berryman through sheer will and guts has put it there.

J. V. Cunningham's orientation is very different from both of these. He is looking at the modern world from the standpoint of traditional modes of writing, and principally from those of the eighteenth century. He evidently feels himself pulled together and helped by regular metrical patterns and rhymes, reassured and bolstered by form as it has been defined and exemplified by generations of writers before him; one imagines him as a man who would probably feel dismayed and even terrified if ordered, under pain of death, to write in free verse. He knows his limitations, and often one feels that he concedes entirely too much to them: there is, after all, a poetry of opening-out and going-beyond as well as one of compression and concision. But as a compressor, as a couple-

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teer, as a fastidious and mordant wit, a man who makes interesting dwellings of the neat cells of the couplet and the quatrain, he is hard to beat.

It was in Vegas. Celibate and able
I left the silver dollars on the table
And tried the show. The black-out, baggy pants,
Of course, and then this answer to romance:
Her ass twitching as if it had the fits,
Her gold crotch grinding, her athletic tits,
One clock, the other counter clockwise twirling.
It was enough to stop a man from girling.

Word-placement, the exactitude thereof in rhythm, meaning and tone, is crucial to the success of such writing. I went through this little poem trying to change things, for if something, anything, can be made better than it is as the poem has it, the method is not fully realizing itself. I tried "five silver dollars" in the second line, thinking the poem would gain by greater specificity (and I am not entirely sure that some such change wouldn't help a little here), I tried (timidly) "switching" in place of "twitching," "starred crotch" for "gold crotch," "whirling" for "twirling," and "keep a man" for "stop a man" in the last line. I still feel that I might—at least to *my* satisfaction—debate a couple of these uses and perhaps one or two more, but it was nonetheless also my feeling that Cunningham pretty much had me checkmated all along the line: that he *had* written a largely irreducible, unchangeable poem, a good poem, although not quite of the same order as that poem under glass in Paris several decades ago: the poem that Paul Valéry, seeing it displayed in the vitrine of a bookstore, tried with increasing vexation to change, until he raised his eyes from the text and saw that it was a page of *Phaedra*.

Cunningham is a good, deliberately small and authentic poet, a man with tight lips, a good education, and his own agonies. His handsome little book should be read, and above all by future Traditionalists and Compressors; he is their man.

His new *Selected Poems* shows Louis Simpson working, at first tentatively and then with increasing conviction, toward his own version of a national, an American poetry: as one reads, it becomes easier and easier to think of him as a specifically American poet, and one finds oneself more than a little surprised that this is so. For after all, what *is* an American poet? Particularly *now*? At the words, at the *thought* of an American poet, one thinks of several alternative possibilities. The first is of a poet (or nonpoet) like Russell Davenport, twenty-odd years ago, and his much-publicized-in-slick-magazines-but-quickly-and-mercifully-forgotten poem *My Country,* and of writers like Stephen Vincent Benét at his worst. One also thinks of Whitman not only at his worst but at his best, and of Hart Crane. One thinks of lesser "epical" writers like Sandburg, Norman Rosten, Norman Corwin, Harry Brown, Winfield Townley Scott. And one also remembers chroniclers of the American *scene,* like Karl Shapiro and John Ciardi, including the finest of them all, John Hollander. Simpson is closer to this last group than to any of the others. He demonstrates that the best service an American poet can do his country is to see it all: not just the promise, not just the loss and the "betrayal of the American ideal," the Whitmanian ideal—although nobody sees this last more penetratingly than Simpson does—but the whole "complex fate," the difficult and agonizing *meaning* of being an American, of living as an American at the time in which one chances to live. If it comes out sad, as it does with Simpson despite all his wit and compassion, it is a whole and not a deliberately partial sadness, and this gives the pervasive desperate sadness of this book a terrific weight of honesty and truth. Nothing can be done, although at one time perhaps something might have been. But now the individual has only what he has, only what history has allowed him to be born to.

There's no way out.
You were born to waste your life.
You were born to this middleclass life

As others before you
Were born to walk in procession
To the temple, singing.

Through the used-car lots, through the suburbs, through the wars that are only

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the intensification and temporary catharsis of the life we lead now, Simpson moves in this book, and moves memorably and skillfully. Principally there is the feeling of the great occasions of a man's life being veiled, being kept from him by the soft insulations of his civilization, he being all his life comfortable and miserable, taken-care-of and baffled. Since there is no primitive singleness of response anywhere, since one cannot hope for spontaneity, one takes it out in wit. Simpson's tone is often much like Jarrell's, although more nervous, irritable and biting. Jarrell's poems deal with the slow wonder of loss; Simpson's less resigned ones are more bewilderedly angry. If I had any objections to Simpson's work they would tend to group around a knowledgeable glibness, an easy literary propensity to knock off certain obvious sitting ducks. But this is a very good book, a good spread of Simpson's work, and the intensity of his intelligent despair throughout it is harrowing. Although at times a little flip, Simpson is in reality no man for facile answers, and if he is self-consciously more American than most of our other writers, that is our gain, and, whether it wants it or not, our country's as well.

In connection with William Meredith's verse, the two words that come most often to mind—that is, to *my* mind—are "balance" and "relaxation." He has none of Simpson's impatient bite, of Simpson's way of seeming to *turn* on the subject like a man driven at last beyond the limits of endurance. Instead he is introspective and a little diffident, grave and perplexedly troubled, particularly when he can't do anything about what is happening, what has happened. He is the kind of poet who stands looking at the ocean where the atomic submarine *Thresher* went down, meditating, speculating, grieving intelligently. Things of this nature hurt him into poetry, but not poetry of great intensity. Instead, it seems muffled and distant, a kind of thin, organized, slightly academic murmur. One keeps listening for Meredith's *voice,* and is baffled at its being, although one is surer and surer it is there, so consistently elusive. It is not at all to be found in those poems imitative of, say, Frost, such as "An Old Field Mowed for Appearances' Sake," but rather in pieces like "For His Father" and, oddly, in the wonderful translations from Apollinaire, which seem, although faithful enough as translations, really more Meredith's than Apollinaire's. It is better to hear "My glass is filled with wine that trembles like a flame" than to hear, in Meredith's poem *to* Apollinaire, "The day is colorless like Swiss characters in a novel," which presupposes that the reader agrees that Swiss characters in a novel (what novel?) are colorless, that everyone knows they are (*I,* one *shyly thinks, didn't know they are, and* keeps one's mouth shut about it) and thereby enters into collusion with a certain ingroup variety of bookish snobbery that is probably Meredith's one outstanding weakness as a writer. But at his best he is a charming poet, cultivated, calm, quietly original, expansive and reflective, moving over wide areas slowly, lightly, mildly and often very memorably.

Donald Hall's approach is similar, although he is not so subtle or so broad. This book shows him to be somewhat between manners. Some of these poems sound very much like Robert Bly, and in this case the influence does not seem particularly good. No one can touch James Wright at this kind of thing, and Hall, who is (in my opinion) about on the same level or perhaps slightly below Bly in this orbit, would be a very great deal better off if he would not deliberately cast himself in a subsidiary role, for poems like "The Snow," "The Stump" and "Cold Water" are decidedly the best he has ever written, and they owe nothing whatever to the Bly orthodoxy. But Hall seems too often to write a poem simply because, as a poet, he is expected to do so: to write *some* poem. He obviously enjoys the act of writing, but he does not seem particularly responsive as a human being, and this frequently results in a kind of attenuation, a pleasant, skilled inconsequentiality, and the production of poems that even while they are being written are being herded peacefully toward the abyss marked Oblivion. Hall needs to for-

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get about Poesie for a while, and to be taken up into something that will shear off forever all his good-humored blandness. He needs to hate and love, and to find some way of his own to get these emotions and other vital, primitive ones into poems. A great many of these pieces are merely predictable rehearsals of Literary Virtues. Hall needs to make statements that matter, to solve once and for all—and in his own way, not somebody else's—the problem that John Berryman beautifully outlined years ago as "the fundamental thing required: to sound as if he meant it."

Hall might also do well to accept some advice from Melville Cane's prose piece "A Way of Life": "To summon fresh energies from untapped sources." Cane's own work, here presented in a seventh volume, is modest and quiet, frail. I liked the small imagistic poems better than the attempts at light verse, for these latter do not always escape the air of superiority that in good light verse becomes a stylistic virtue and in bad or mediocre poems an embarrassment. The title poem and "At This Unlikely Hour" are good by virtue of their being one degree—an essential degree—above being merely pleasant, and a few of the translations of Evgeny Vinokurov, a poet for my introduction to whom I am indebted to Mr. Cane—poems like "Hotels" and "Bathing the Children"—show not only the translator's true sixth sense but the poet's as well.

Robert Duncan's way, his orientation, is largely that of Ezra Pound.

> where the Day slept
> after noon, in the light's blur and shade
> the Queen of the Tree's Talking
> hears only the leaf sound,
> whirrr of wings in the boughs,
>
> the voices in the wind verging into leaf sound.

As may be seen, Duncan has managed to reproduce a little of the older poet's sound, although at a very great remove. Duncan has a good many of Pound's mannerisms and almost none of his superb talent, his *instinct* for significant or interesting juxtaposition, his marvelous sense of timing, his ability to make of many fragments a whole greater than any one of them. Consequently one feels in Duncan's work mainly drift, arbitrariness. Some poets drift well, but Duncan only periodically does so. He is intelligent in a special sort of narrow way, he is learned in the curious matters that one can become learned in if one has the time and the inclination, but none of this ever seems to come to much on the page.

> If I think of my element, it is not of fire,
> of ember and ash, but of earth,
> nor of man's travail and burden
> to work in the dirt, but of the abundance,
> the verdant rhetorical.

The failure of such dandified writing is, I think, apparent without further comment, but the kind of failure it is might be instructive in certain ways. The tone is high and bookish, a self-conscious mixture of Victorian pomposity and humbleness-from-a-high-remove. It is easy to write like this—again, if you have the time—and consequently Duncan's book is the largest one of these eight, and the least interesting. One brings away from it only a sense of complicated inconsequence, of dilettantism and serene self-deception, of pretentiousness, of a writer perhaps natively gifted who has sold himself the wrong bill of goods (or, one wants to say, trappings), and so has come out gorgeously arrayed in other men's garments, predictably beautiful, "artistic," elaborately dead.

These, then, are some of the ways, some of the orientations, in a chance collection of new books of poems. The primary ways are Jarrell's—a total commitment to experience and the attempt to find a mode by which words may seem to efface themselves and allow the experience to stand magically in the place where they formerly were—and Berryman's way of idiosyncratic artifice, a method that strives to raise the ultimate Construct above mannerism into style. As these are the ways, Jarrell and Berryman are the two best poets of all these, and American poetry will surely be determined for some time by which lead is followed, which man most successfully used.

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Reviewed by ADRIENNE KOCH

A fresh volume apiece for three of America's greatest men is a jackpot for American history buffs. The editors of these majestic documentary publications projects have once again opened new sources of information and insight to all who desire to know about the emergence of this country as an independent nation, through the agency of its great men who committed their country to a new set of individual and social values.

The original mandate for these grand, comprehensive editions of the papers of the leading philosopher-statesmen and others was issued by President Truman in 1950, when he was presented with the first volume of the standard-setting *Papers of Thomas Jefferson,* edited by Julian P. Boyd and published by the Princeton University Press. President Truman, who was more than an official enthusiast for American history, was deeply impressed with the superb quality of Boyd's Jefferson volumes, and he instructed the National Historical Publications Commission to submit a plan to make available "the writings of men whose contributions to our history are now inadequately represented by published works."

The Franklin and Madison volumes and the pace-setting new Jefferson volume constitute three imprints in the series of sturdily progressing publications projects. Another splendid series of volumes, *The Adams Papers,* under the editorship of Lyman Butterfield, and the rapidly increasing series devoted to *The Papers of Alexander Hamilton,* complete the circle of five major editorial enterprises devoted to the lifelong correspondence and writings of the keenest intellects among the founding fathers. To these new documentary treasure troves of eighteenth-century America we will soon be able to add the first volume of *A Documentary History of the Ratification of the Constitution and the First Ten Amendments,* edited by Dr. Robert E. Cushman and Leonard Rapport. Several other magnificent plums lie *below* the surface of the historical pie—juiciest of these (the cooks whisper) is in its initial preparatory stage, and will document the history of the first Federal Congress.

It would be too much to ask for a neat pattern from the three invaluable volumes that have just been added to the Franklin, Madison and Jefferson editions respectively. Nonetheless these welcome volumes permit us to set down probes at three revealing points in the illustrious period when America, and the American character, were being formed. Volume 8 of *The Franklin Papers* highlights the American state of mind just prior to the rise of the revolutionary movement. Volume 4 of *The Madison Papers* opens before the reader the evidence of the uncertain unity achieved by the war-weary American states under the Articles of Confederation; and it makes luminous the dangers, both domestic and foreign, that beset the United States on the very eve of victory and peace. Volume 17 of *The Jefferson Papers* convinces us that the near-miraculous preservation and strengthening of the union, which resulted from the Constitutional Convention and the ratification of the Constitution, represented only one wave (although it was a big wave) breasted, in the surging ocean of temporal affairs. The fact is that Jefferson's transactions in his first year as Secretary

✪ ADRIENNE KOCH is this year Visiting Honors Professor in History at the University of Michigan. The Princeton University Press will publish soon her book on James Madison's "Advice to My Country."

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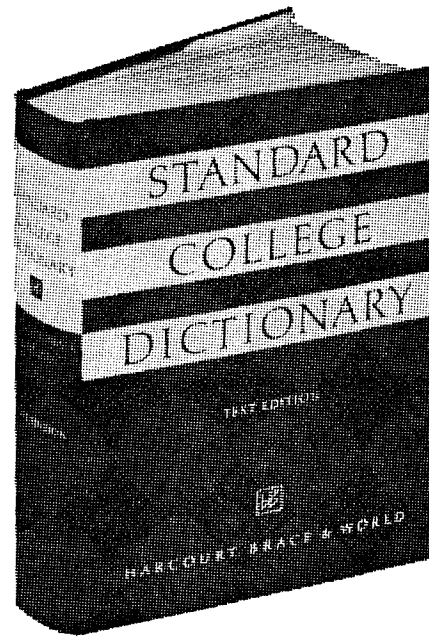

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of State, when he was establishing the office and its powers, provides a fascinating record of the daily leadership that transferred the *outlines* of an American republic to the reality of a republican political system. But by what painful processes of discovery, adjustment and adjudication the calendar of political creation was filled, may only now be glimpsed in its eloquent and intricate human terms.

Despite this valuable cargo of information on the times, embracing the rise of the revolutionary mind, the dangers of American disunity on the eve of victory after seven hard years of the Revolutionary War, and the creative acts that shaped the American pattern of public responsibility in the opening years of the Republic, it remains true that the greatest interest these publications continue to excite centers in the men whose writings are put before the reader. Never were they presented with such fidelity and so much clarifying editorial information to help the reader gauge their true import. In this regard, each volume provides a candid profile of the man at a particular phase in his life journey.

One finds Franklin in the year 1758-59, enjoying considerable celebrity already, as a natural scientist and a significant man of letters and inventive ideas. In the course of this volume, he receives an honorary degree from St. Andrews University—the magic Doctor of Laws that converted the once humble printer into "Doctor" Franklin. The language of this first of the many honorary degrees he was to receive is illuminating about his reputation outside America, even before the Revolution would bring Americans to notice before the intelligentsia of the European world. The degree read, in part:

> Whereas the ingenuous [*sic!*] and worthy Benj: Franklin has not only been recommended to us for his Knowledge of the Law, the Rectitude of his Morals and Sweetness of his Life and Conversation, but hath also by his ingenious Inventions and succesful Experiments with which he hath enriched the Science of natural philosophy and more especially of Electricity which heretofore was little known, acquired so much Praise throughout the World as to deserve the greatest Honours in the Republic of Letters . . . we declare the above named Mr. Benjamin Franklin Doctor of Laws and will that for the future he be treated by all as the most worthy Doctor, and we grant to him with a liberal hand all the Privileges and Honours, which are anywhere granted to Doctors of Laws.

Despite this engaging tribute to "the Rectitude of his Morals and Sweetness of his Life and Conversation," Franklin was *persona non grata* to Thomas Penn and the other members of the Proprietary family in London. His official mission was that of Colonial Agent for Pennsylvania, charged with pressing the Assembly's complaint against the Proprietors before the Privy Council in London, and presenting the request that the Proprietors' immunity from taxation on their vast estates be rescinded. Although in these months Franklin won no decisive victories on this issue or on the Proprietors' alleged fraud in Indian lands, he was already unmistakably an American, a man to be reckoned with—although it would be absurd to imply that he had rebellion in mind.

During this period, Franklin also traveled extensively in England and Scotland, including various "rambles" through the English Midlands where he and his son, William, visited their ancestral homes at Ecton and Banbury, and even hunted up Deborah Franklin's Birmingham connections. This genealogical interest on Franklin's part is worth noting, since he is notorious for priding himself on being a "self-made" man and was entirely sincere in his enlightened commitment to "the family of mankind." But he was no Thomas Paine, and had too strong a sense of human character to rest content with Everyman's lineage from Adam and Eve! A touching letter from his aged first cousin, Mary Fisher, compliments him for having taken "more Care to preserve the Memory of our Family, than any other Person that ever belonged to it"—a family of which she was proud because "it acted that Part well in which Providence had placed it, and for 200 Years all the Descendants of it have lived with Credit, and are to this Day without any Blot in their Escutcheon, which is

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more than some of the best Families i: e. the Richest and highest in Title can pretend to." Thus even Franklin's "common sense" had had a lineage.

The Madison volume reveals the thoughts and doings of James Madison, aged thirty, up to his ears in work as a Virginia delegate to Congress in 1782. By that time the aged Doctor Franklin was living in Paris, serving the cause of American Independence with a luster perhaps never matched by anyone in the long line of American diplomats from his time to ours. But otherwise it was a younger generation's day; and Madison, although eclipsed by a greater political leader who was already his friend, Thomas Jefferson, was coming into the public limelight as an acute reasoner and farseeing statesman. The book opens with Madison in the midst of the bitter contests in Congress over the terms of a treaty of peace with Great Britain. Characteristic of the wise policy-making that would distinguish his zenith years, Madison's "Report on Instructions on Peace Negotiations" sought to reconcile internal sectional differences between New England and the Southern states (the former anxious principally about fishing rights on the Banks of Newfoundland, the latter adamant about freedom of navigation of the Mississippi from its source to its mouth). Even more important, Madison intended to achieve, by Congressional agreement upon the indispensable terms of the British treaty, an inducement for the continuance of union, hoping that the states would stand together in the common effort to obtain optimum treaty provisions. An excellent editorial headnote to the intricate issue of the peace negotiations prefaces Madison's report and illuminates the political import of its terms.

These issues continue to occupy Congress throughout the year. Madison's motion, urging the states to send full delegations to Congress, and Resolutions on fidelity to the alliance with France—both of which were adopted by Congress—are closely related to them. In June, a splendid public letter was written anonymously by the Marquis de Barbé-Marbois and supposedly merely *translated* by Madison. But in truth Madison seems to have been responsible for its composition—otherwise, in the acute judgment of Irving Brant, Madison's biographer, "Marbois had a genius for uttering Madisonian thoughts." The letter rejects a "divide and conquer" approach to the American-French alliance by the British. It reviews the grounds of America's obligations to France, congratulates Maryland, Pennsylvania and Virginia for their declarations, disdainfully rejecting every offer of a separate peace "and every proposition which would throw the slightest stain on our national character." Pride in "the title of American" is eloquently avowed at the end of this striking letter to the public, and justified on the grounds of the varieties of courage already proved by Americans in standing up to the devastation of war without being shaken. Contentment, however, was not Madison's intent. He reserved the surprise for his final sentence: "Nothing is above our courage, except only (with shame I speak it) except the courage to TAX ourselves." The financial crisis was produced at least in part by the refusal of the states to comply with requested appropriations by Congress, and by their unwillingness to yield to that body the power of compulsory taxation. In this instance it is perfectly logical—and not absurd—to see the shape of things to come. Madison's perception of the critical weakness and "imbecility" of congressional responsibility for a union without congressional authority over money, troops, or domestic order and harmony in the commercial and other policies of the states, set him smartly on the road to the Annapolis Convention, and ultimately to the Constitutional Convention of 1787.

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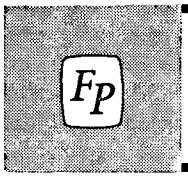

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ican foreign policy (reviewed in this journal, Spring, 1965), are a case in point. This entire story of Hamilton's secret dealings with a British secret agent, in his effort to push American policy toward a closer connection with Great Britain than the President, the Cabinet and Congress believed to be in the national interest, represents a major historical break-through. Yet it seems to have come about purely in the line of editorial duty. For Mr. Boyd is the kind of editor who cannot tolerate an unsolved problem, or rest content with gaps in the record. Thus, his phenomenal combination of brilliance in historical explanation and superhuman doggedness in probing the raw materials, indeed in pursuing every recalcitrant scrap of written evidence, raises each successive volume of the Jefferson Papers to the level of major historical discovery. This has proved true, whether the scope of a volume is five months or—as in the superb first volume —approximately fifteen years.

The present volume gives us Jefferson in many other guises than his fateful hassle with Hamilton in the Anglo-Spanish war crisis of 1790. For example, until the appearance of this volume, even the experts could not appreciate the extent and importance of Jefferson's share in creating the Federal City. Everyone was familiar with the famous "bargain" between Hamilton and Jefferson that brought agreement on the assumption of state debts, sweetened by the agreement to fix the permanent seat of the government on the Potomac. Jefferson himself, in his *Autobiography,* had publicized this understanding. But as the editorial headnote makes clear, streams of ridicule flowed in the newspapers, and equally were voiced in Congress, over the location of the permanent residence of Congress. Typical of these was the observation Mr. Boyd quotes of the newspaper wag, who thought "the only kind of permanence would be a peripatetic government, as under the Articles of Confederation, and suggested that Pierre L'Enfant design a mobile capitol on wheels." Jefferson and his Virginia associates could not have been more alive to the danger that despite the Residence Act a new national capital on the Potomac might *never* be established. Credit must now be given to Jefferson, with the assistance of Madison, for guiding the strategy that implemented the Residence Act and indeed read that act in its fullest possible extent of power. By establishing correct dates for hitherto misdated documents, and by reconstructing the historical context in its veridical detailed development, Mr. Boyd conclusively documents his view that Washington, Jefferson and Madison were all thorough "realists," of extraordinary political resourcefulness. As he points out,

> The Act fixing the permanent seat of government did not stipulate that a capital city be laid out. It did not even direct that a district of ten miles square be claimed for the federal government . . . it merely set this as the maximum limit. The government under the Residence Act could have functioned quite as easily within the limits of Georgetown as Jefferson and Washington feared it might continue to do permanently in Philadelphia.

But Jefferson had fixed in his mind the requisite objectives.

> There would be a new city laid out and planned so as to be worthy of the rising empire; the district for the seat of government would be of the maximum size permitted by the Virginia and Maryland resolutions and allowed by the law; and to attain the great object it would be necessary to press forward immediately and vigorously and to appeal to the self-interest of the landowners in the vicinity.

The new chronology of documents concerning the seat of government now makes it clear that Jefferson was the "father" of the city of Washington, influencing far more than its architectural design. We now realize that Jefferson not only devised the strategy for establishing the city but won, by his insistence, a spacious capital city that "one day would become the political capital of the world." The dream of a republican experiment, a new secular order, demanded at least that much of a fresh start.

It is legendary that Jefferson's many-sided interests never dried up, even in the

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Richard J. Stonesifer is Dean of the College of Liberal Arts at Drew University. 256 pages, $6.50

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midst of the most stringent political responsibilities. Volume 17 provides fresh documentation for this legendary yet genuine view. The same man who was preoccupied with shaping a policy of neutrality in the threatened war between England and Spain while exacting substantial concessions for neutrality from both powers, was the man who ordered French wines for the President and for himself. The same man whose hand controlled the creation of the Federal City, worked diligently to create a system of consular establishments commensurate with America's rising importance. Meeting the misdirected Republican slogan that it was folly for a young republican country to get entangled in European courts, Jefferson marshaled charts and data whose intelligence was unmistakable. He succeeded in driving home the uncomfortable truth that even such minor powers as Sardinia and the Sicilies dwarfed the vast empire of the new world in diplomatic establishments.

Perhaps the secret of Jefferson's persisting human appeal may be hinted at in the language of some of his correspondents in this volume. The Italian, Charles Bellini, whom Jefferson in his term as Governor of Virginia had appointed professor of modern languages at William and Mary College, mentioned Jefferson's "natural inclination to assist wretched humanity." Benjamin Vaughan, the English liberal and friend of America, concluded a letter to Jefferson with the observation, "I believe you are the first nation that ever produced statesmen who were natural philosphers." Finally, this volume virtually comes to a close with a report by David Humphreys from London, where the American diplomat was able to compare the political and social climate in England and France with what he judged to be characteristic of America. He wrote: "Here Man, from want, depravity and despair, wars against humanity." Whether true or false of the British scene, his confidence in the humanity of a republic whose statesmen were of the order of Franklin, Madison and Jefferson was not excessive for that time and for the promise of that new country.

Three Days Off for Puck

THE ORGY. *By Muriel Rukeyser. Coward-McCann. $4.95.*

Reviewed by HELEN MERRELL LYND

"Three days off for Puck" appears in the year's contract of every Irish farmer. Puck's Fair combines an ancient pre-Christian ritual—the crowning of the Goat, King Puck —with a cattle and hiring market, a fair complete with fortune-telling, dancing, side shows, balloons, and a convention of indigenous Irish Tinkers.

Why have reviewers had such difficulty with this book? And why should you be interested in a book seemingly so remote from Vietnam and Selma? The answer to the first question points toward an answer to the second.

Some reviewers may be disappointed that *The Orgy* does not provide the salaciousness its title suggests. Some may be embarrassed by an author who gives so much of herself in a book that is not labeled autobiography. More are bewildered by not knowing what label to put on it. It is not a novel, or a book about the Irish coast of Kerry, or a description of an ancient ritual. And the book trails off, as *War and Peace,* as life, trails off: King Puck goes back to being a goat, and the narrator goes back to being a human being among other human beings in more ordinary existence. Probably the goat is not the same after this experience. Certainly the narrator is not the same, and the reader is not the same.

The impossibility of putting this book into a customary classification is one reason for reading it. We cope with the complexity of existence by slogans and labels, and what we cannot classify we tend to brush aside like an Aristotelian accident. We can be-

HELEN MERRELL LYND, formerly professor of social philosophy at Sarah Lawrence College, is coauthor of the *Middletown* books and author of *England in the Eighteen-Eighties, On Shame and the Search for Identity* and *Toward Discovery,* to be published this fall. She is currently working on *Imagination and Truth: A Study of Four Discoverers.*

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come aware of the "foul rag and bone shop of the heart," of filth, and sordidness, and depravity if we see them in separate categories as Freud and Genêt have taught us to see them. But we still find it hard to come close to them, to see them in all their crudeness and fervor, and, even harder, to see them close to tenderness and beauty. It is not easy to confront the essential contradictions of existence. But if the world of the Tinkers, the dung of cattle, the crowning of the goat exist, we must either say that these things have no meaning or try to discover what that meaning is.

A first reading of this book left me overwhelmed with its colors and shapes and sounds. I had been to a part of the world of whose location I was hardly aware on the map, and I had come to know it better than places many times revisited, because I had been there with a person of extraordinary perception and power of words to express it. With her I had shared:

the many-flowing, braided water

the sun in the garden where it rained all night. Heavy drops on the leaves, mercury on the swords of iris.

On the far side, nine white ducks and one speckled duck came to their decision: among the grasses came walking down, and launched themselves, all but two who, remembering hesitation and its values, hung back, until it was clear that they did not care. And sailed themselves, too, out upon the river.

In the grate, threaded gold, the turf burning, silent where the chocolate fiber burns up without a word. Coal, wood utter in the flame the sounds of the forest. This peat burns speechless in the silence of the bog, ferny in fire, little streams of flame in the brown earth of this soft bed, this fuel, contemplation.

rock-rushing waters, mountain-sprung and violet in their speed, white, eddying, dark-halted, full of choices.

that penitential landscape with its sea and its praying crags

With a second reading the people became more alive. A third reading brought the realization that they had been there from the beginning, but that I had been so absorbed in the immediate descriptions of the landscape and the Fair that I had not been fully aware of all that is implicit in them. Or of the symbolism of the Fair, and the weaving together of all the separate and contradictory parts of these three days. The pieces "move together, flowing and racing with that sea in the channel, blue and green, with the green green land and its dark mountains lifted over, and the offshore island ahead." "The truth turns out to be the first thing, but with an entirely different meaning."

The finely experienced and imagined account of these three days on the Kerry coast presents in vivid imagery a profound philosophical problem, usually stated only abstractly: the nature of perception. We know that there is no such thing as "objectivity" apart from a perceiving person. A "factual" account of Puck Fair would be what any particular observer calls facts. But few writers would have the courage or the skill to make us aware of what experience she brought to this ritual that determined what she saw in it.

Miss Rukeyser's doing this is one thing that perplexes and embarrasses the reviewers. If Miss Rukeyser had told us her dreams, as Freud did and as she does once or twice, we might say "How brave!" But Freud has made the recounting of dreams respectable. It is quite a different matter with daydreams and wandering daytime fantasies, which we rarely tell to others, and have a hard time admitting to ourselves.

But Miss Rukeyser's allowing us to become aware of what associations she brought to Kerry and what those three days unfolded in her is what makes reading this book the unforgettable experience it is. For us, as for her, the Fair becomes a releasing and revealing event:

He reminded me of Jonah . . . But many men and almost all things reminded me of Jonah these days.

I was brought up not to talk about three things: sex and money and death. And the excrement, the wet and dirty—you know how they work on our cities to keep them dry? To try to display life as *not* sticky, *not* wet.

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I swung into a movement that had begun when the King was crowned . . . No, before that, when the procession moved slowly through the crowd in the Square . . . No, before that when we stopped at Killorglin and the lines and stains and creases in the green fence suddenly reminded me of all the people, all the threads in my life. No, long times ago, in all the movements of the rousing of these storms of passion, rages and lightenings of wish, storms of action, all narrowed down to my life in these last few hours with these three new friends.

I fade out of the talk. Something is happening to me; as if I were at a play that I fully accept. I do not identify with the heroine. I do not identify with the hero, or the murdered father, or the lustful mother who marries the new king. I identify with the whole play.

As for myself, there had been a revelation . . . I saw how the temptation was to go back to the moment *before* revelation, to go on with one's old life.

Certain images and sounds stay with me: Miss Rukeyser polishing glasses in a pub so that she would miss none of the Fair, a white horse seen from a train window running across a field, the Tinker's children with their "hopeless, unheard sobs," "the small strong crying of the newborn, one of the most strongly evocative acts of life." But what stays is more than any or all of these. Some books enlarge the meaning of the words with which we try to describe them. *The Orgy* has, for me, enlarged the meaning of "luminous."

"The European Civil War"

STRUGGLE FOR THE WORLD: The Cold War: 1917-1965. *By Desmond Donnelly. St. Martin's. $7.95.*

Reviewed by DEAN ACHESON

The simplest ethical standards in book reviewing surely require the disclosure by the reviewer of circumstances bearing upon the impartiality of his judgment. The dedication of the book to the reviewer is such

✪ DEAN ACHESON was Secretary of State from 1949 to 1953.

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a circumstance. It is the case here. Yet the reviewer confidently asserts that this is an excellent and important book and should be read by all—and they are many—who have been disturbed by the vociferous criticism of American action in Southeast Asia and the Caribbean.

The subtitle of Mr. Donnelly's book is "The Cold War: 1917-1965." But the book is more than that. It gives the reader an insight into those basic changes in the nature and location of power that have brought about the struggle called the cold war. This struggle is not so much for the world, as for an environment—and a spacious environment—within the world in which free nations may exist and prosper.

The key to Mr. Donnelly's conception of what happened to bring about this struggle lies in his own phrase to describe the events from 1914 to 1945, the "European Civil War." It was civil war in Europe that destroyed the European-dominated One World of the nineteenth century, a world held together for a century by the concert of the great empires of Europe and administered beyond their boundaries by their colonial systems and by the British-supported Monroe Doctrine. Throughout the globe this system produced a century of unparalleled economic development; international peace; and freedom of movement of people, ideas and goods. Its destruction left two centers of power and two conflicting systems of human relations. One of these was and is inherently expansive and aggressive through its motivating conception of world revolution.

Underlying these events and the cause of the breakdown of the European system was the shift in the center of power in Europe, in the period 1814-1945, from France to Germany, and then to the Soviet Union. Furthermore, the power of first Germany and later the Soviet Union so increased relative to the combined power of all other European states that only the addition of American power made possible resistance to first one and then the other.

All of this underlies Mr. Donnelly's detailed, accurate and absorbing account of the last twenty years, perhaps as critical

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and creative years as any since the Congress of Vienna. The account is not of a congeries of conferences, crises, plans, doctrines, wars and near wars. Rather it brings out unity of purpose, a constancy of effort, and the significance of events. Rarely can these factors be seen so close upon action itself. Thucydides perceived significance almost contemporaneously; but Gibbon had the perspective of nearly two millennia. Mr. Donnelly's achievement is a notable one.

The book is divided into four "Parts," although those living through the period did not at the time discern them or know their beginning or ending. Part One, from 1917 to Hitler's attack on the Soviet Union, recounts the decline and disintegration of Europe and the growth of the viruses that would come so close to killing it, Soviet and Hitlerian ideologies, and their ultimate conflict. Part Two describes the birth and death of the Western alliance with Russia and the destruction of the German state, as well as of the power of Germany and Japan.

Told in Part Three is a story of creation reminiscent of the first chapter of Genesis, the creation of half a world without destroying the whole. At the beginning came the valiant efforts, and their failure, to control nuclear power and weapons, to encourage and aid economic development, and to preserve peace through internationally accepted principles and authority. Then the United States led the way, with heavy expenditure of American funds and American lives in making a free environment possible. First came the economic restoration of Europe, the reinvigoration of political purpose, the furnishing of military security, the reconciliation and restoration of our former enemies—Germany and Japan. The Soviet Union brought every expedient that perverse ingenuity could devise to sabotage this task, including the blockade of Berlin and the wars of national liberation in Greece, Korea and Southeast Asia. Nevertheless, the effort succeeded brilliantly.

In the last Part Mr. Donnelly pictures what he calls the "Deadly Stalemate" of the last few years, in which first one of our

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opponents and then the other has used force or the threat of it to chip away the area of freedom: Khrushchev from 1958 to 1961 at Berlin, in 1962 in Cuba; the Chinese during the last two years in Vietnam. So far the same determined action that built the free world after the "civil war" has preserved it. But, as in the past, faint hearts hail each renewal of effort with shrill cries of protest and predictions of defeat and failure which Walter Lippmann makes available to them biweekly.

To all who weary of leadership and yearn to rest, and to the great majority who deserve the encouragement of the greatness of their achievement, Mr. Donnelly's book will give hope and bring reward.

The Holy Ghost and the Dog

DOG YEARS. *By Günter Grass. Harcourt, Brace & World. $6.95.*

Reviewed by EARL ROVIT

The amazing thing is not the sudden truth—the epiphanous flush and sense of quickening life that is always the sign of the singular and superior creative event. He who is fortunate enough to witness a miracle is too absorbed in his own self-delight to question the validity or the antecedents of what he has experienced. No, the amazing thing is that others are privy to the mystery; that the good news has traveled so far and so fast. How could my private miracle have become so quickly multiple and public! Not since the equally sudden and complete recognition of Albert Camus in the late 1940's has a single writer risen into a comparably vivid orbit of unquestionable significance and import. Günter Grass has effected the miracle of giving us an authentically new voice in our multitudinous babble. His vision of the world is both a corrective and a liberating lens for our mottled introspections and our

EARL ROVIT, on leave of absence from the English department of the City College of New York, is this year a fellow of the Guggenheim Foundation.

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murky speculations. When the great writer appears, he appears *whole,* rendering the illusion that makes us believe ourselves to be a unity in his assurance of a world. And we term this a miracle because the effect goes far beyond the laboring craft of one man; indeed, it dwarfs even the work that is its living presence.

The Tin Drum, Cat and Mouse and now *Dog Years* are undeniably the special creations of a particular isolated sensibility—that of an irreverent, word-drunk Catholic from Danzig; and yet, in some sense, the personal Grass is only a catalyst, the mute translator of private experience into a form that is as impersonal as a crucifixion, as much the collective creation of mankind as the global horror of World War II or the Promethean daring of space exploration. For surely this is one of the stark lessons that the twentieth century has been at pains to teach its children. The old distinctions between *public* and *private* have almost entirely disappeared. My uneasy, barely concealed frustrations and miseries are universal traumas; the staccato bursts of violence that pucker the earth's surface are the spasms that fester my sleep. Definitions of public and private, of nationality and race, of genre, craft and discipline, of science and culture, fact and fable—all have become increasingly delusive. The most useful distinction for us would seem to be that which points to a difference between the whole and the disparate and it is in these terms that Grass's work may have an inordinate value for our world.

The creative products of mankind belong to all men because they are made by all men. This is a truth that we will commonly accept more readily in its negative dress when we acknowledge our collective guilt and responsibility for the active crimes of the relative few. With a mammoth hunger Grass gorges himself on this ultimately indigestible feast of wholeness. He is the engineer of the death factories, the strafer of the crowded refugee roads, the pitiless destroyer, the untrammeled insatiable appetite. He is also, of course, the victim—the incinerated ash, the twisted

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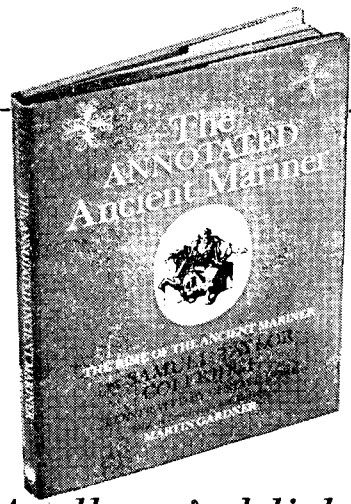

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loin, the terrified bullied spirit. This choreography of sadist in *pas de deux* with masochist we know well enough. We have learned that evil is a synonym of banality and we have seen all mankind become psychologically certified as banal. And we have suffered a paralysis of desire under this clinical diagnosis of slow death. But Grass offers a way of breaking the stale duet of passionless victim and victimizer; he provides a third direction for the interlocked stresses of the sterile coupling—a direction Camus may have been moving toward in the self-conscious ambiguities of *La Chute*. For men are more than mere victims of their own powers of destructiveness; they are also victims—fruitful fortunate victims—of their own creativity. If man is the torturer and the sufferant, he is also the creator. If he is guilty for the mounds of white bones that the bulldozers scrape into the earth, he is also responsible for beauty, for goodness, for the standards of meaning that he invokes to make accusations of injustice—even to rail wryly at the absurdity of everything. Grass's work is a subcutaneous certificate delivered to all of us which testifies that the Holy Ghost as well as the dog is beneath our skin.

It seems inevitable—now that it has happened—that Grass should be German; indeed, that he should be a German "outsider," a Danziger with a conflicting double allegiance to region and cultural group. Literary dominance has run a frenetic course in this century—from Ireland to the prewar Austro-Hungarian Empire, to France, to America, briefly back to France in the forties and early fifties, and now, twenty years after the war, to Germany and the German-speaking environs. Behind and around Grass stand *Gruppe 47*, Uwe Johnson, Heinrich Böll, Jakov Lind, Gisela Elsner, Max Frisch, Friedrich Dürrenmatt, Rolf Hochhuth, Walter Jens and many others. We still know next to nothing about the causes of a literary renaissance, but it would seem obvious that the German artist has a particularly pressing need to seek for such meanings as art alone can gather, and, at the same time, he is even more desperately

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needed by his own immediate audience. It seems fair to say—economic miracles notwithstanding—that no social group has a greater struggle to become human—*to feel human*—than has the German. Under these conditions Germany can hardly afford a literature of entertainment, of decoration, of even mild social criticism. For the salvation of his own soul as well as those of his neighbors (and especially those neighbors who will never read his work), the German writer must engage himself in a most difficult task.

He must ignore innocence—radical or otherwise—because it is the assumption of innocence that will most completely destroy his integrity. He must absorb and reject the total past—absorbing only that which accords with his most astringent experience of deceit in the soul and cruelty in the flesh. He must reject the larger part of that past in which are imbedded all the brilliant idealisms, principles, harmonies and assured certainties that can so readily explain the unpardonable and forgive the inexplicable. He must take every insane aesthetic chance; he must shatter traditional form, choose coarseness over refinement, grotesquerie over realism, lyrical and comic transport over the severe dramatics of rationality. He will discover that his greatest enemy is *irony*—that bittersweet substitute for sentimentality that the Teutonic genius has brought to perfection from Heine to Thomas Mann and Gottfried Benn. He will find Morgenstern and Grabbe more useful as guides than Hölderlin and Schiller. He will have to keep a respectful distance from the great Goethe and he will have to be resolutely untempted by the transcendental harmonies of sound and sense that nineteenth-century German music has bequeathed him. He must remind himself constantly that when one listens to supernal music, one runs the danger of being blind to human reality. He must shut his ears and open his eyes, studying the immediate urgencies of the Blue Riders and the Bauhaus experimenters—learning to see the world under the harsh tutelage of the Expressionists of the twenties, the great *Simplicissimus*

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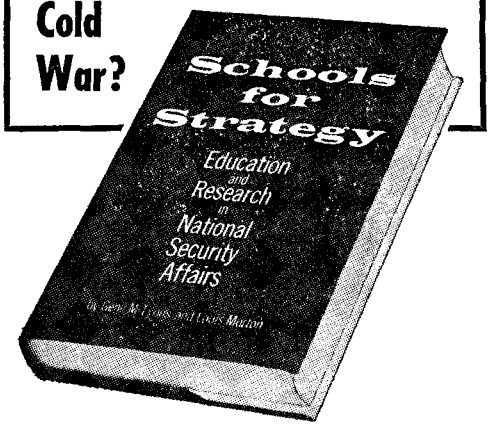

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cartoonists, the dark lithography of George Grosz and Käthe Kollwitz.

But he will also find himself drawn outside of the specifically German tradition. Each shift of literary dominance in our century has been accompanied by an increasing artistic cosmopolitanism—a steady contraction of geographical space and historical time. Like Camus before him, Günter Grass is at least as intensely influenced by his European or Western identity as he is by his specific nationality. In particular it seems to me that he has been one of the two significant moderns (Faulkner would be the other) to have thoroughly assimilated that metamorphosis of sensibility that the truly international revolution of the motion pictures has wrought. Grass's prose style (like Faulkner's) and his sense of narrative focus and structure seem to me to be essentially formed in terms of cinematographic techniques. He tends to dispense with the scene-as-tableau (the traditional scenic unit which was formed under the influence of the eighteenth-century theater and nineteenth-century studio photography); instead, he presents an always fluid narrative picture. The focus is rarely static and the scene itself is never in arrest. The focus moves unpredictably through distance and time—a stark or grotesque close-up, an abrupt shift or cut, pan shot, fade-out, fade-in, a multiple montage, a blur, a hard statistical edge. The fixed iconography of symbol and image is blithely discarded for the cumulative arhythmical sweep of motion and density.

Dog Years (which may very well be the overall title for Grass's interlinked, unfinishable chain of novels) is narrated by three different narrators who are telling overlapping stories; none of their stories, however, are fixed or internally coherent. The plot—or plots—are arbitrary in a formal sense; that is, unlike the segments in *The Sound and the Fury,* they are not parts of a composite whole and they do not determine the significant structure of the whole. And although the narrators are distinctively characterized, their biases of personality do not seriously distort the

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thematic import of the events that they individually describe (as, for example, in *The Alexandria Quartet*). It would surely have been far more simple for Grass to have distributed his identities functionally among his narrators. To have made the half-Jew Eduard Amsel (alias Haseloff, Brauxel, Brauchsel) into the classic victim; the bullish Walter Matern, Eddi's sometime blood brother, the traditional victimizer; and Harry Liebenau (who seems to share something of Grass's own biography), the creative collator and interpreter of events. But just as the fabulous dogs of the novel (Perkun, Harras, Prinz and Pluto) merge into one uneasy hybrid caninity, so the three narrators all exhibit a deliberately muddled mixture of simultaneous possibilities and willful denials of possibility. This sacrifice of simple definition was very much worth making, I think, because the sense of man that Grass develops becomes much more honest and cogent than any categorical nicety could have effected. Each of the three characters enacts his own betrayals and each makes some attempt at self-redemption. Grass's own voice—or, at any rate, the voice of his auctorial persona—is clearly recognizable behind all their accents, calling every shot and ringing every change.

And the structure of the novel itself is ultimately fashioned by the moving camera focus of Grass's controlling voice—introspecting, reporting, speculating, digressing in erratic antiquarian tours through history, reciting the litany of Danzig place names and landmarks, streetcar stops in the suburbs, East European battles, describing meticulously the tide depths of the Vistula, the inner design of balletomania, the multiple varieties of rock specimens and indigenous bird life, the difficulties of potash mining, the monopolistic corruptions in the postwar economic miracle. The structure of *Dog Years* is thus almost completely informal. It avoids the imposition of dramatic design that Faulkner accepted in his investigations into the determinants and consequences of racial crime. For where Faulkner's work is obsessively past-oriented,

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Grass is temperamentally less inclined to turn history into myth (an inevitability for the past-oriented artist), and brazenly desirous of keeping the future open and undetermined. Similarly, he rejects the cyclical determinism of the picaresque journey or quest motif—the search for the meanings that are ultimately residual in the searcher to begin with. To be sure, he suggests something of this fatal determinism in his brilliant depiction of the childhood friendship between Amsel and Matern, especially in his careful examination of that compulsive repetition that forces Walter to throw away Eddi's gift of brotherhood—to assert spasmodically his own alien identity and then be unable to live alone as a fragment of his own experience. Crucial, however, and prototypical as this characterization of the ambivalences of human companionship is —and it is both paralleled and varied by the subordinate Harry-Tulla and Harry-Jenny relationships—Grass's employment of this material is thematic rather than structural. *Dog Years* is subservient to a new kind of structure that is porously indifferent to its own thematic concerns, cumulative and open-ended in its formal development, and, it seems to me, authentically revolutionary in its attempt to comprehend the jaggedness of our contemporary world.

It is extremely difficult to discuss this new kind of structure, partially because it is so new that we lack a suitable critical responsiveness to its more subtle successes. It seems to have been fashioned in order to reckon with the historical (not mythic) actuality of unpardonable sin and consequent guilt. It aims at breadth and evocative texture rather than arbitrary intensity. And it is not satisfied merely to accuse—merely to force a shocking acknowledgement of sin and responsibility. It departs violently from our traditional strategies of dealing with guilt—the Catholic exposure of confession and the passive acceptance of penance and grace; or the more active Protestant ordeal of expiation and redemption. There is, for example, nowhere in *Dog Years* any manifestation of that Incarnation that anchors the metaphysical designs of Dante, Dosto-

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evski or Faulkner. Grass discards the teleological paradigm of crime-and-punishment, finding it shop-worn and dangerously obsolete for our peculiar needs. (What *historical* relevance can Raskolnikov have when faced with the atomized blood of Auschwitz?) There has been a terrible crime, but there is no punishment; indeed, there can be no proportionate punishment for bureaucratic genocide. And, at the same time, dreadful agony has been inflicted upon men in a way that is ultimately gratuitous and unconnected to any prior crime. These two assertions are constantly counterpoised in Grass's work, sometimes occurring simultaneously, and Grass manages to make both of them dramatically true. All men—the victims and victimizers alike—are criminals who escape scot-free from the consequences of their acts; and all men are grievously punished, but they are existentially innocent in proportion to the grievous suffering that is laid upon them. The traditional dialectic of justice has been cacophonously interrupted; *Wort* and *Antwort,* action and consequence, have been dissevered from one another.

Each man must bathe by himself if he would be washed clean; or so Grass suggests at the conclusion of *Dog Years*. But how he is to find his way to this bath, and how effective or lasting the cleansing will be, Grass does not say. He demonstrates forcibly that self-knowledge and self-forgiveness are cardinal requisites for purification, but Grass is cynically aware that men are creatures of partial integrity at best; the process of self-renewal can neither be complete nor completed. Man is doomed to struggle eternally for his own humanity, and if this conclusion seems to smack of Goethean idealism, it is a Goethe heavily tinged by tragicomic shades of gloom. Or, more precisely, it is Goethe's panoramic vision of the universe, but the lenses have been ground by Kafka and Karl Krause. With its protean power to expand traditional dialectics into a plurality of modifying possibilities, the open-ended structure of Grass's fiction suggests the bold attempt to grasp at a new rhythm of morality—a morality that may possess a real pertinence for sins committed by individual souls that no longer have separating barriers between their private and public definitions.

Grass's accomplishments are not only major, but, I believe, of vital importance as well. With Lagerkvist seemingly retired into silence and Nabokov increasingly occupied with the cosmic spite of artful deceptions, there is a vacancy at the summit of our contemporary fictional achievements. The Americans and the French seem to have become more interested in refurbishing and redecorating the artifices of their great predecessors—adding brilliant explanatory codicils, as it were, to the still-glowing testaments of Faulkner, Hemingway, Gide and Camus—than in daring the new vision or forging the new form. The fashionable antinovel and the fiction of black or brown humor would seem to have become locked into barren interstices, incapable of leading to anything new except paler and wilder imitations of themselves. Grass, like his German contemporaries, has suffered a violent hiatus from tradition; his is an involuntary exile, and he has only himself to help him to his blasted home. But if his task is personal, his fragmented, tentative solutions have a wide pertinence. He refuses to relinquish the steady grip of the Western moral tradition. Souls may have lost their privacy, but they are still, for Grass, souls, and there are still standards and values which exist in the darkness of men's moral uncertainties. To be human is to judge and be responsible for the shape of one's life. No acceptance of mindlessness —no pious invocation to the soporifics of violence or passive acquiescence to a force of will stronger than one's own—can quite mitigate that primal responsibility. Grass retains with a savage hold his freedom to beat a moral tattoo on his tin drum; and the childlike drum-roll is all the more shattering and persuasive because it is utterly responsible.

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